Information Related Entrepreneurial Activities of Public Libraries in Southeast States of Nigeria

Igbo, H. U.; Imo, N. T. & Asadu, B. U.
Nnamdi Azikiwe Library
University of Nigeria Nsukka

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the information entrepreneurial services of the public libraries in southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The survey design was adopted for the work. The population comprised of forty-seven librarians of the five library boards in the zone. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire while the data was analyzed using the percentages and the mean. The findings revealed, among others, that most of the requisite entrepreneurial services are not available in the libraries and as such the extent of providing the services was low. It was recommended among others that the public libraries should introduce information related entrepreneurial services and enlighten the members of the community about the potentials of these services for their overall development. Also government support is recommended for the provision of ICT infrastructures required for the services.

Keywords: Information, Entrepreneurship, Development, Development information, Public Library.

Introduction

Information has been identified as an economic/basic need upon which societal development depends (Mutula & Moahi, 2008). Public libraries are established to carry out government functions of providing all inclusive information to the populace with the aim of enhancing individual's contribution to the development process. This role is recognized by UNESCO (1994) in its manifesto which prescribes that the public library should be positioned to provide members of the community the vital information that would help them get educated in order to keep abreast of progress in all aspects of human life.

Observations from John-Okeke & Owoeye(2011) have shown that public libraries are challenged by poor funding, inadequate staffing, poor collection and minimal availability of information and communications technologies(ICT) facilities. The above challenges could be attributed to too much reliance on government for funding. To meet the expectations

placed on them, Opara-Umunna (2012) has recommended the diversification of the financial base of public libraries through engagement in information-related entrepreneurial activities. By so doing the library as an institution would succeed in expanding its economic base for provision of information as goods and services which in turn will improve the knowledge of individuals and enhance the skills of librarians in making extra money to help them in meeting their personal needs.

In this regard, Skrzeszewski (2006) argued that in capitalist and knowledge economies, librarians should engage in entrepreneurial activity in both profit and not-for-profit environments. The theoretical basis upon which the above argument depend is established by Gboyega & Kolawole (2014) who identified two schools of thought whose philosophies serve as guiding principle for provision of information as goods and services. These are the conservative and liberal schools of thought. For the conservatives, information provided by the library should be free because it is assumed that the cost has been paid for by the larger organization. The liberal school of thought supports charging of fees for information because according to them information is a commodity that should be traded in monetary terms as the effort in information generation, processing, storage and dissemination cost some money and has to be paid for if not to make profit, to recover the cost. Libraries have been operating in

line with the principles of conservatism as highlighted above. However the developments in information and communication technologies, web 2.0 technology and social media have accentuated the liberal school of thought to become part of library ideals and principles largely due to the economic value of information and the poor funding scenario as shown in the preceding paragraphs.

IFLA (2013), while insisting that access to information is a fundamental human right and an important factor that can break the cycle of poverty and support sustainable development, recommends that public libraries must provide needed information by local communities to improve their education, develop new skills, find jobs, build businesses and make informal agricultural and health decisions. Hence Kumbhar (2010) identified health information for rural communities, information for politicians, administrators, farmers, job-seekers, medical specialists, feasibility reports, and development information in web-portals, knowledge gateways which could be available online or off-line using CD-ROM as the kind of information that can be provided through entrepreneurial activities. Similarly, Onaade (2012) identified the following as clients for information related entrepreneurship: information – hungry professionals such as speech writers, competitive intelligence professionals, marketing directors, product managers; organizations that

do not have in-house library but need professional research support, librarians who need to outsource some of their research and people with specific information needs.

Provision of the above information products to the specified clients require varied services which have been identified by Kumbhar (2010), Ekere & Ekere (2012) and Nwosu & Unagha (2014) in different studies to include contract cataloguing, indexing, abstracting, literature review, online literature search/information retrieval, computer operation services, print services, information packaging, publishing, translation, consultancy services, capacity building, outreach services and reference services(selective dissemination of services, current awareness services). One may add that advocacy and outreach/public relations services are very vital aspects of the services required in information-related business. It is through these channels that the librarians could create awareness to the rural communities, offices and official gatherings about the availability and potentials of these services.

However, observations made by Uzuegbu (2014) and Nwosu & Unagha (2014) have shown that public libraries are not living up to expectations with respect to these services. In the view of Onaade(2012), this is as a result of low reading culture, lack of awareness, lack of basic ICT infrastructure and inadequate power supply . Considine (2005) added lack of business training on the part of librarians. This is supported by findings of Liu and Allen (2001), Chikonzo, Bothma, Kusekwa & Mushowani (2014) and Akanwa, Anyanwu & Ossai-Onah (2014) which indicates that only a minority in the field have information related business skills. Hence Onaade(2012) recommends the coordination, marketing, promotion and publicity of information business and creating awareness of the usefulness of information management for societal survival.

Consequently, the problem of this study is to investigate the information related entrepreneurial services provided by public libraries in Southeast states of Nigeria.

Purpose of the study
The general purpose of this study is to explore the information related activities of public libraries in Southeast states of Nigeria. The study is anchored on the following specific objectives:

1) To ascertain the availability of information entrepreneurial services in public libraries of Southeast states of Nigeria.
2) To identify the extent of information related entrepreneurial services provided in public libraries of the Southeast states of Nigeria.
3) To find out the challenges of providing information related entrepreneurial services in public libraries in Southeast states of Nigeria.
4) To suggest strategies for improving information related

entrepreneurial services in public libraries of Southeast states of Nigeria.

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study:
1) Which information related entrepreneurial services are available in public libraries in Southeast states of Nigeria?
2) To what extent are information related entrepreneurial services provided in public libraries in Southeast states of Nigeria?
3) What are the challenges of providing information related entrepreneurial services in public libraries in Southeast states of Nigeria?
4) What are the strategies for enhancing information related entrepreneurial services in public libraries in Southeast states of Nigeria?

Methodology
Research Design: The design adopted for this study is descriptive survey. This design helps in systematic and comprehensive collection of data and feedback about opinions, attitudes, feelings and behavior of respondents (Kuter & Yilmz, 2002 as cited in Obaseki, 2014). It is equally suitable for a study of this nature which is covering a wide area for it allows for easy application of the instrument for data collection.
Area of Study: The area of study is southeast geopolitical zone of Nigeria. This zone is made of five states: Abia,

Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo sates. Each of the state has a state library board with zonal public libraries located in designated local government areas in addition to community/resource centers established by philanthropists/ non-governmental organizations. The zone is economically significant to the growth of Nigerian economy as a result of the availability of big centers of business in addition to the natural resources like crude oil, coal and the rich soil for agricultural production. The people in this zone need information that would help them to participate actively in the opportunity provided by these endowments to contribute to development initiatives.
Population for the Study: The population for the study comprised of all the professional librarians of the public libraries located in the Southeast Nigeria. Observation visit and pilot study conducted prior to the research revealed that there were altogether 47 librarians working in the public libraries of this zone. This is made up of Abia(14), Anambra(8), Ebonyi(5), Enugu(8) and Imo (12). The entire population was used for the study because the number was small. Hence there was no need for sampling.
Instrument for Data Collection: A 4-point scale questionnaire was developed and used for data collection. This was divided into two major sections. The first section was for eliciting demographic information of the respondents with open-ended questions. The second section which

has 4 clusters addressed issues related to the research objectives/questions. The questions in the first cluster representing research question 1 was presented in a frequency table while the last three clusters were presented in a four-point mode. The reliability of the instrument was computed after a trial test using the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Coefficient. This was established at 0.68 which shows that the instrument was reliable.

Data Collection: The data collection was collected by the researchers during the annual general meeting (AGM)/ national conference of the Nigerian Library Association held in Enugu in June 2014. Also visits were made to the government owned public libraries in the area of study to distribute the questionnaire to some of the respondents who were absent in the national conference. The data collection exercise lasted for three weeks. Out of the 47 copies of questionnaire distributed, only 35, which represented 74% were returned and all found useful for the analysis.

Data Analysis: The data was analyzed using the percentages/frequency distribution for the demographic information of the respondents and for answering research question 1. Analysis of data with respect to

research questions 2- 4 was done using the mean ratings. The criterion mean was established at 2.50 since the questions were on a 4-point rating scale. By this mean any score 2.50 and above was accepted while score below 2.50 was rejected.

Findings of the study
 Demographic Information
The demographic data of the thirty-five respondents show that with respect to age, 16 representing 46% were males while 19 (54%) were females. With respect to qualification, 10(29%) had Diploma/Certificate, 16(45%) had Degree, 7(20%) had Masters Degree while 2(6%) had Doctor of Philosophy(Ph.D).The data also revealed that 2(6%) were in the rank of Director of Library Services, 3(9%) were Chief Librarians, 8(23%) were Senior Librarians, 12(34%) were Librarian I, 8(23%) were Librarian II while 2 (6%) were Library Officer. On work experience, only one respondent representing 3% had worked between 1 – 5years, 10(29%) had 6 – 10 years experience, 8(23%) had 11-15 years and 16- 20 years working experience respectively, while 6(17%) and 2(6%) had 21 – 30years and above 30 years respectively.

Table 1: Information related entrepreneurial services available in public libraries

S/N	Services	Abia	Anambra	Ebonyi	Enugu	Imo
1	Publication play of survival information	NA	A	NA	NA	NA
2	Directory compilation	NA	A	A	A	NA
3	Editing of information for clients	NA	A	A	A	NA
4	Desktop publishing	NA	A	NA	NA	NA
5	Abstracting and indexing services	NA	A	A	NA	NA
6	Information clipping	NA	NA	A	A	NA
7	Providing information on demand	A	A	A	A	A
8	Information consultancy	A	NA	NA	A	NA
9	Internet search for clients	NA	A	NA	NA	NA
10	e-mail services	NA	A	A	NA	NA
11	Online downloading of information	NA	A	A	NA	NA
12	Printing services	NA	A	A	NA	NA
13	Photocopying services	A	A	A	NA	A
14	Organization of workshops	A	A	NA	NA	A
15	Dissemination of information about products and services	NA	A	NA	NA	NA
16	Organization of film show	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
17	Organization of art exhibition	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
18	Organization of folk-table session and story classes	NA	NA	A	A	NA
19	Organization of book fares and exhibitions	NA	A	NA	NA	A

Key: A = Available   NA = Not Available

Deduction to be made from the above table 1 is that generally, public libraries in South East Nigeria do not offer most of the identified entrepreneurial services. However, a close consideration of the individual services shows that information on–demand services are available in all the libraries, photocopying services are available in four out of the five libraries , directory compilation, editing services and organization of workshops are available in three of the libraries. Clipping services and e-mail services are available in two of the libraries while none of the libraries offer services related to printing of materials for clients, organization of film shows and organization of art exhibition. Availability of other services varies among the libraries. Even though this is so, the greatest percentage of the services (73.68%) is available in Anambra State Public Library. This is followed by the services in Ebonyi State (47.39%), Enugu State (31.57%) and Imo State (26.32%) with Abia State as the least (21.05%).

Table 2: Mean responses on extent of provision of information related entrepreneurial services in Public Libraries

S/N	Entrepreneurial Services	Abia	Anambra	Ebonyi	Enugu	Imo	Grand mean	Decision
1	Pub/display of survival information on health, housing, job opportunities etc)	2.25	1.63	2.50	2.50	2.22	2.22	low
2	Directory compilation	1.63	2.38	2.43	1.50	1.67	1.91	Low
3	Editing of information	1.88	2.49	2.35	2.25	2.46	2.28	Low
4	Abstracting/indexing	2.13	3.13	2.00	3.25	1.00	2.30	Low
5	Desktop publishing	2.25	2.88	1.83	3.25	2.00	2.44	Low
6	Information clipping	3.00	2.50	3.00	2.57	2.55	2.72	High
8	Providing information on demand	2.55	3.25	3.17	2.75	2.67	2.82	High
9	Information consultancy	2.10	2.00	2.45	2.25	2.44	2.25	Low
10	Internet search	2.35	3.00	200	2.45	2.11	2.38	Low
11	Email service	2.41	3.00	2.49	2.43	2.11	2.48	Low
12	Online downloading	2.25	2.88	2.17	1.75	2.33	2.28	Low
13	Printing service	2.40	3.50	2.17	1.50	2.37	2.38	Low
14	Photocopying services	2.75	2.50	3.50	2.75	2.11	3.72	High
15	Organization of workshops	2.43	2.45	2.47	2.35	1.22	2.30	Low
16	Dissemination of info products	2.33	2.43	2.45	1.75	1.11	2.19	Low
17	Organization of film shows	2.00	2.25	1.83	1.75	1.44	1.85	Low
18	Organization of film shows	1.39	2.00	2.17	1.75	1.67	1.79	Low
19	Organization of folk tale	1.75	2.13	2.00	3.50	1.33	2.14	Low
20	Organization of book fares	1.50	3.38	2.00	1.75	1.75	2.08	Low

Deduction to be made from the above table 2 is that provision of information entrepreneurial services across the states studied is low. A consideration of the grand mean scores of the services shows that only three of the nineteen identified services were offered to a high extent across the libraries. These include provision of information on demand (2.82), photocopying services (3.72), and clipping services (2.72). Though this is so, a consideration of the individual item mean shows that the extent of provision of internet search services (3.00), e-mail services(3.00), online

downloading of information(2.88) printing services (3.50) and organization of book fares (3.38) in Anambra State is high unlike what is obtainable in other states.

Table 3: Mean responses on the challenges of information related entrepreneurial services in Public Libraries

S/N	Challenges	Abia	Anambra	Ebonyi	Enugu	Imo	Grand Mean	Decision
1	Low ICT skills among library staff	3.75	3.00	3.33	3.25	3.00	3.27	Challenge
2	Non provision of internet access in the library	2.88	1.75	3.00	3.00	2.78	2.68	Challenge
3	Lack of skills in the use of social media	3.13	2.75	3.67	2.75	3.00	3.06	Challenge
4	Non provision of personal computers to staff for their work	3.00	2.88	4.00	2.25	3.00	3.03	Challenge
5	Low staff awareness on the importance of acquiring entrepreneurial skills for their wellbeing and professional performance.	2.63	2.75	3.17	3.00	3.44	2.99	Challenge
6	Staff lack of skill in indexing and abstracting	3.13	2.63	2.83	2.50	2.56	2.73	Challenge
7	Lack of constant power supply	2.75	2.75	3.17	3.00	2.67	2.87	Challenge
8	Non-inclusion of courses on information entrepreneurship in the curriculum of library schools.	3.25	2.75	3.50	2.75	3.22	3.09	Challenge
9	Lack of organizational support for staff continuous education programmes on emerging issues in librarianship profession.	3.50	2.75	2.83	3.00	3.00	3.02	Challenge

Data in table 3 above indicates that all the identified items are challenges encountered in providing information entrepreneurial services in public libraries. These ranges from low ICT skills among library staff (3.27), non-inclusion of courses on information entrepreneurship in the curriculum of library schools, (3.09), lack of skills in the use of social media (3.06) and non-provision of personal computer to staff for their work (3.03) others include, lack of organizational support for staff continuous education programmes on emerging issue in librarianship (3.02), low staff awareness on importance of entrepreneurial skills (2.99), lack of constant power supply (2.87), staff lack of skill in indexing and

abstracting (2.73), and non-provision │ of internet access in the library (2.68).

Table 4: Mean responses on the strategies for enhancing information entrepreneurship in Public Libraries

S/N	Strategies for Enhancement	Abia	Anambra	Ebonyi	Enugu	Imo	Grand Mean	Decision
1	Provision of internet connectivity/access in the library	3.75	2.88	4.00	3.75	3.56	3.59	Positive
2	Organizing in-service training programmes to improve the ICT skills of librarians for effective library services	3.50	3.00	3.50	3.75	3.22	3.39	Positive
3	Provision of such ICT facilities as personal computers to library staff	3.25	3.25	3.67	3.75	3.11	3.041	Positive
4	Training of the librarians on the use of social media in information service delivery	3.25	3.75	3.50	3.25	3.33	3.42	Positive
5	Training of staff to update their skills in indexing and abstracting	3.25	3.13	3.83	3.25	2.89	3.27	Positive
6	Creation of awareness and encouraging staff to adapt and key into changes related to the profession	3.13	3.25	3.50	2.75	2.78	3.08	Positive
7	Provision of alternative power supply system as a complement to the regular power system.	3.13	3.75	3.50	3.25	2.78	3.28	Positive
8	Review of library schools' training curriculum to include courses on entrepreneurship	3.13	3.88	3.83	3.50	3.33	3.53	Positive
9	Sponsoring of librarian to conferences workshops/seminar and organization of in-service training for up-grading of knowledge and skills of staff.	3.25	3.50	4.00	4.00	3.33	3.62	Positive

Data from table 4 above shows that the strategies for enhancing information entrepreneurial services include sponsoring of librarian to conferences/ workshops/ seminars and organization of other in- service

training programmes for staff (3.62), provision of internet connectivity/ access in the library (3.59), review of library school curriculum to include courses on information entrepreneurship (3.53) and training of librarians on the use of social media in information service delivery (3.42). other strategies include provision of ICT facilities like personal computers to staff (3.41), organizing in-service training programmes to improve ICT skill of librarians (3.39), provision of alternative source of power supply (3.28), training of staff to up - date their skills in indexing and abstracting (3.27) and creating awareness and encouraging staff to adapt and key into changes related to the profession (3.08).

Discussion of findings

Most of the requisite entrepreneurial services are not available in majority of the public libraries except the services in respect of providing information on- demand which cuts across all the libraries. There variations in the availability of other services among the libraries. The availability of a bulk of information related entrepreneurial services in Anambra State Public Library could be an indication of the high level of interest support of both the government and philanthropists in the state which is revealed not only through an informal report made by the Library Director but also through the large number of information centers and the online public library established in the area.

Extent of provision of information entrepreneurial services was found to be low. This finding could be a function of the above earlier findings on inadequate availability of the services and general lack of knowledge, ability and skills on the part of the librarians. Again Anambra State provides more of these services which obviously are as a result of the presence of the online public library in the state.

The challenges identified for information entrepreneurial services include, lack of training on entrepreneurship, lack of ICT facilities and skills, inadequate power supply, lack of indexing and abstracting skills among librarians, lack of awareness and lack of organizational support for professional development. Some of these findings corroborate the findings of Considine (2005) and Onaade (2012). While Considine identified lack of business training, Onaade identified lack of knowledge/ awareness on the part of both users and the librarians, lack of basic ICT skills and infrastructure and inadequate power supply.

The strategies for enhancing information entrepreneurial services as revealed by the study include, inclusion of entrepreneurship courses in the training curriculum of library schools, provision of internet and other ICT facilities, in-service training of librarians on entrepreneurship related services and ICT skills, provision of alternative power supply and increased organizational support for professional development.

Conclusion

The position of this paper is that provision of information related entrepreneurial services is critical to the role of public libraries in national development. There is no doubt about the relationship between information and overall development. Information is fundamental to the development of the individual, family and society at large. For public libraries to achieve the objective of providing all inclusive information in the face of government neglect and low funding there is need for public libraries to adopt entrepreneurship principles and practices in their service delivery. This would play a tripartite role of enhancing the economic base of individual librarians, helping the library as an organization to generate funds for enhanced service delivery and on the overall, enable individuals have access to development information that will enhance their living standard and general wellbeing.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore advanced to improve public libraries role in development through information related entrepreneurial activities:

1) The public libraries should engage in entrepreneurial activities in their process of service delivery as a proactive measure of enhancing patronage from the community.
2) The libraries should embark on advocacy and outreach visits from time to time to create awareness in the rural communities about the existence of development information materials in the libraries through which they can meet their information needs.
3) The curriculum of the library schools should be reviewed to incorporate courses in information related entrepreneurship. This would help in producing graduates who are ready for the task before being employed
4) The Nigerian Library Association/ The librarian Registration Council should support the libraries by mounting up workshops, seminars and other training programmes for librarians in the public libraries to keep them abreast of current developments in the field.
5) In the current ICT dispensation, government of various states should support the establishment of online/digital libraries which should encourage resource sharing/ networking among the public libraries.

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