

## **ISSUES IN FUNDING OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

This paper entitled; Issues in funding of Public Libraries aim at critically analyzing the problems associated with funding of Public Libraries in Nigeria. Its specific objectives are therefore to: examines its existing funding sources, challenges associated with funding and strategies for enhancing Public Libraries in Nigeria. The paper focused on funding particularly as a challenge to Public Libraries in the Nigerian case. The paper adopted qualitative research design gathering data from both primary and secondary sources of data. It was found that the dilapidated status of Nigerian Public Libraries is as a result of over reliance on government for funding, and the governments' inadequate funding to the libraries. The paper reiterated that Public Libraries can operate better if they look at: advocacy, private donations, fundraising etc as alternative sources of funds. It was then concluded that, the solutions to the problem of funding is the implementation of alternative funding of the libraries, through library investments, donations, advocacy etc. The paper recommended that Public Libraries should be adequately funded so as to facilitate acquisition of information resources for utilization by the public. Public Libraries should also implement alternative funding strategies to enable it function effectively and efficiently.

**Keywords:** Funding, Public Libraries, Challenges and Solutions.

### **Introduction**

A Public Library in the real sense is a reservoir of knowledge, information and work of imagination all in the kind of resources and services it provides. It is equally available to all members of the community regardless of: race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, employment status and educational attainment. People in all works of life use Public Libraries' resources, facilities and services. The users of Public Libraries include pupils, students, teachers, scholars, scientists, business executives, government officials, and even drop out. Large numbers of people also turn to Public Libraries to satisfy their desire for knowledge or to obtain materials for some kind of leisure-time activities, (Garba, 2019). According to Svendsen (2013) in Garba (2019:1), a Public Library is a meeting place that provide some individuals and collective benefits to local communities free of charge. That is, the services provided by Public Libraries is charge free. The availability and good functioning of a Public

Library is greatly advantageous to the people since it provides them with self-education and development, information, social interaction and networking, cultural enrichment and educational support towards the attainment of the goals of the public and individuals who use the library. Also, a public library on like other types of library houses a variety of library collections on various fields and aspects of human endeavors. Its contents are not restricted like other types of libraries. In the words of Okeuhi et al (2022:1), Public Libraries are established to render information resources, services and recreational outlets for the generality of the citizenry, namely; the young, the old, the literate and the non-literate. That is, its contents are meant for everybody regardless of field or gender. This is not the case with other types of libraries like Academic Libraries that are restricted to specific users and their contents made for just such group of people.

It is no doubt that the functionality and use of Public Libraries in Nigeria is dancing with one leg. This is as a result of mismanagement, especially in terms of funding and policies. Funding for instance have led to the decrease in size, quality and quantity of library materials and in fact the general services rendered by Public Libraries in Nigeria. These challenges have crippled the essence of Public Libraries. The level of efficiency and effectiveness of a public library depends on the availability of finance at its disposer, for management purpose. Hence, the compelling need to properly fund Public Libraries to enable them satisfy the information needs of different types of people it is made to serve, considering the services and categories of people served by Public Libraries. The need for funding of Public Libraries cannot be neglected. This is because funding enables Public Libraries to satisfy the: Information needs of the public, enhance resources acquisition, provision of library services, maintenance of infrastructure and Staff motivation, (Okeuhi *et al*, 2022).

If a Public Library is to meet the objectives for its establishment, for the procurement and processing of materials, for hiring of personnel and for purchase and maintenance of equipment it will require finances. As the local gateway of knowledge, Public Library should adequately be funded to enable it achieve its objectives, considering the need for the provision of library services by Public Libraries, there is need to provide adequate funding for Public Libraries so as

to serve the teeming population of clienteles that need the services of Public Libraries. According to Okeuhi *et al* (2022:1), Public Libraries are supposed to be agents of popularization of information literacy, so that every citizen should be able to identify his or her information needs, know where and how to demand for information, how to use the information collected in satisfying life's options, using a variety of information resources. Nevertheless, Public Libraries cannot achieve these laudable goals without proper funding. Funding is very important in every organization, especially as it pertains to the public library which is a non-profit organization”.

According to Garba *et al* (2019:2), “Public library funding refers to making money available for the day to day running of the library. Financing here deals with making money or funds available to Public Libraries. Finance is the life wire of any establishment, including land, labour, capitals and information. The capital here refers to finance, which can be used to procure other factors of production thereby, making it more critical than others. Funding is the dominant element in every establishment; it is equally the working capital of an establishment”. Without adequate funding, Public Libraries may not function effectively.

Public Library funding generally means the various ways we drive the expected fund for capital and recurrent expenses. It involves the money available or allocated to the Library for running its day to day activities for improved library services delivery. However, the funding and financial allocations to Public Libraries have remained weak in decades. Public Libraries need adequate resources to: run their services, pay and hire competent personal, provide current information materials, arrange, organize, and monitor both human and materials resources, (Garba, 2019). It is with the importance of funding in Public Libraries and the dilapidated status of Public Libraries in Nigeria that this paper examines its existing funding sources, challenges associated with funding and strategies for enhancing Public Libraries in Nigeria.

### **Existing Funding Sources of Public Libraries**

Public Libraries in Nigeria depend largely on the government and a little on internally generated revenue (IGR) for its funding. Folorunso (2010), Ajegbomogun (2010), and Arts Council England (2014) cited in Garba *et al* (2019), agree that the role of internally generated revenue

(IGR) to the funding of Public Libraries cannot be waved away easily. It contributes a great deal in the development of public library services since it enables libraries to access emerging digital technologies and sources. In developing countries like Nigeria for instance, the use of IGR for organizational funding is rampant. Most of the times, IGR come in form of: photocopying services, rental of halls, study carrels and offices, the token collected from users' library membership registration, scanning and bindery services, publishing and printing services and the organization of seminars and workshops. Another way of raising funds could be through soliciting for funds from wealthy individuals, as in the case of the New York public library, which in 2011 received from a financier \$100 million for the expansion of the library, (Garba *et al*, 2019). This type of gesture is a common practice in developed countries, where community members actively participate in the development of Public Libraries.

### **Challenges Associated with Funding of Public Libraries**

Public Libraries in Nigeria are of course on a crossroad being hit by several challenges and are only struggling to survive. These challenges among others include:

#### **Inadequate Funding**

Inadequate funding is observed to be one of the major challenges affecting Public Libraries in Nigeria. It has led to shortcomings in service delivery by Public Libraries such as: poor services, unconducive study atmosphere, inadequate current collections in Public Libraries, lowered zeal to work from librarians and so on. That is why, Odebiyi (2009) in Garba *et al* (2019:6) asserted that, the present crisis in libraries, especially in Public Libraries, stems from under-funding, which leads to a lack of adequate infrastructures and facilities. This observation has made the learning environment too hostile for learning and research purposes. This also led to lack of commitment from staff and users to the Public Libraries' overall goals and objectives. Major facilities needed in the public library can no longer be adequately provided because sometimes after staff salaries are paid, little or nothing remains for other required facilities. Garba *et al* (2019), the survey across the six geo-political zones had revealed that public library services are going through hard times. He further asserted that, financial constraint was the major challenge facing the library in the country. He attributed the state's inability to restock the library regularly

to the state of the economy, which has just come out of recession and the lackadaisical attitude of the government on the early release of funds to the library.

### **Use of Traditional Funding System**

As the world is developing, systems of operations and service delivery in all sectors need to upgrade to meet contemporary or global practices. Unfortunately, Public Libraries in Nigeria still use traditional and old systems of operations. Arkorful (2010) affirmed that libraries in Africa have difficulties in satisfying the information needs of their users because the amount of information is so vast that using the traditional method of retrieving information leaves much to be desired. It can be observed that this is to some extent traced back to inadequate funding. Arkorful (2010), noted that, inadequate funding affects the number of materials the libraries can acquire. The library buildings were no longer able to accommodate the growing population of library users. Lack of capital funding had affected the expansion of the library space to accommodate the increasing population of patrons. The computerization of libraries was under threat because of the lack of financial resources from either government or private individuals to maintain the available equipment.

### **Low Priority to Public Libraries by the Government**

Although inadequate funding form the base of the challenges affecting Public Libraries in Nigeria, this inadequate funding is as a result of unstable economy and the low consideration of Public Libraries in Nigerian budget and policies. Ebiwolate (2009) observed that, low financial support was a significant factor hindering the development of public library in Nigeria. He explained further that the primary reasons for this inadequate library funding were the poor state of the economy and low priority given to libraries by the government. As a result, staff and material inputs had significantly been affected due to reduced library funding. Lack of funds also resulted in small collections, cancellation of periodical subscription space problems, cuts in library opening hours, reductions in staff, challenges in the conservation of material, and, more importantly, inadequate services.

### **Depreciation of Nigeria's Currency (Naira)**

Public library budget was undergoing stress for a variety of reasons, which include inflation, cutbacks, and new fields of study, and new formats, especially electronic resources. Writing on the depreciation of the national economy, Badu (2010) affirmed that the Ghana currency was

depreciating daily. According to him, the librarians have to order from overseas the exchange rate changes by the time they put their orders through. This affects orders and payment of British interlibrary loans. The situation is not different in Nigeria, where the currency continues to depreciate when compared with other currencies.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Public Library Funding in Nigeria**

Public Libraries have to significantly create the need for changes in the tools and roles of Public Libraries requiring new information technology skills in addition to traditional library skills. This is because, traditional library service appear to be on the decline while new technology based services are on the rise. According to (Singh and Pinki, 2009), there is need for skill development for information handling in the Public Libraries. In his argument, he maintained that library professionals should render services to users by using different information technology skills. Library and Information Science Schools should introduce skill-based curriculum, making more provision for specialization. There has to be timely updating of syllabus and the facility of well-equipped computer laboratory to cope with the frequently changed technological environment. Professional associations and universities should from time to time organize short term courses for skill enhancement for workers. Another way forward is the organization of seminars, workshops and conferences for professionals (Singh and Pinki, 2009). Also, in order to do away with the challenge of inadequate funding, Public Libraries should look towards alternative strategies as sources of funding of Public Libraries as discussed in the section below.

The dilapidated status of Public Libraries today is as a result of heavy dependence on the Government for its funding who continue to politicize the budgeting and funding Public Libraries. Inadequate funding is a serious challenge affecting the activities of Public Libraries in Nigeria. The government does not fund the public library adequately and this has caused a lot of problems. It hinders effective and efficient service delivery. This problem, according to Ebiwolate (2010) can be likened to lack of political will. He observed that lack of political leads to negligence on the part of government to fund public library properly; non-approval of budget; and non- release or non-implementation of budget (where approved). Inadequate funding has led

to poor condition of services, shortage of professional staff; poor human resource management; extreme dilapidated structures and facilities; obsolete resources; difficulty in extending services to the rural areas, inadequate ICT facilities and others. Aina (2004) posited that the services of Public Libraries in Nigeria are grossly inadequate with outdated collections coupled with lack of sufficient professional librarians. The level of patronage of the existing Public Libraries is low, less relevant materials are acquired; awareness and understanding of the public library concept by the community is poor, bureaucratic in-orderliness, poor funding, and lack of zeal to introduce new services. Unfortunately, Internet facilities installed in some Public Libraries cannot be maintained. Consequently, they are no longer functional as a result of inadequate finance for sustenance and maintenance.

It is therefore clear that over reliance on government funds will hardly yield any good result and that the library has to look out for alternative means to source funds to manage its affairs. Self-funding of Public Libraries is possible through fund raising; through religious organizations, donations, other investments, schools and even social clubs, Public Libraries can raise fund to operate the library.

### **Fund Raising**

Through fund raising, staff of the public library can publish a journal and present same for launching, this may attract fund for the procurement and installation of new gadgets; information resources, establishing a rural library; renovating or digitizing of the library materials.

### **Friends of the library**

Friends of the Library is an association which can be formed by some lovers of the library, and the public librarian may identify with this association through this, fund can be raised to finance the public library. This can be achieved through fund raising events, sponsoring library outreach programs and hosting book fairs.

### **Advocacy**



This can be achieved by mounting public awareness programs to sensitize the public about the services Public Libraries can offer them. Staff of the library can still be of help to the library by helping to improve the image of the library, this can be done through the following ways: (a) public awareness programs which will be geared towards sensitizing the public about the services of public library, (Okeuhi, 2022). According to Agosto (2008) cited in Okeuhi *et al* (2022:5), creating awareness about the services of the public library can bring in a lot as they can volunteer from time to time to work for the library, they can also help in funding the library.

### **Private Donation**

Donations from private individuals comprise a greater percentage of funding than any other alternative source. Private donation as a source of public library support is not a new phenomenon. it is quite imperative to adequately fund Public Libraries to enable them satisfy the information needs of different types of clientele it serves. According to Okeuhi, (2022:6), many Public Libraries across the globe have benefited from personal donations, For instance in the United States. John Jacob Actor made the first significant private donation to a public library by donating \$400,000 of his estate funds in 1839 for its establishment. Between 1839-1999 also, Andrew Carnegie funded the library new building in 1,418 communities across the United States. Similarly, Mr. Emeka Offor an indigene of Irefo Orafite in Ekwusigo L.G.A of Anambra State has been funding libraries through his foundation that oversees funding and provision of information resources to Public Libraries, Rev. Fr. Hyacinth Alia has changed the narrative of Public Libraries in Benue State and Ta'al Almakura has gone to the extent of building Public Libraries in Nasarawa State.

### **Grants**

According to Abdulrahim (2019) in Okeuhi, (2022:8), there are two types of grants: government grants and corporate and foundation grants. Grant that emanate from the government for a particular organization for the execution of one project or the other is known as government grant. Government in some cases gives Public Libraries grants to acquire information resources, develop websites, acquire ICT gadgets, or engage in specific enlightenment campaign that will



benefit the citizenry. Grants are not easily accessed in Nigeria, especially now that the country is experiencing economic depression.

The second type of grant according to Abdulrahim (2019), is Corporation and foundation grants. This grant forms part the important sources of the alternative funding for Public Libraries, and it appears that corporate support for organizations especially the Public Libraries is increasing intermittently. This may be as a result of technological advancement like the social media, the Internet, e-newspapers and magazines etc., that make it possible for people to communicate online. To benefit from this advantage, the administrators of Public Libraries should search for these addresses/links online and use them to access fund to the Public Libraries. The Global libraries Initiative has been privileged to partner with the Inter. J. Acad. Lib. Info. Sci. Public Libraries, making available fund for public library development, the organization has also helped to improve the lives of about 280,000,000 people across African Continent (Abdulrahim, 2019).

### **Investments**

Most Public Libraries charge fees for selected services such as photocopying. Placing reserves, consultancy, Selected Dissemination of Information (SDI), international brokerage, sending the lists of bestsellers and new arrivals to patrons etc. However, many Public Libraries have not engaged in this profit making service for the first time. Although, Goldberg (2014) for instance is of the view that, Public Libraries should offer their services free of charge to its users. In agreement with this, Johannesen (2004), posits that the introduction of fees to the services of the Public Libraries is a shift from the general focus to public library services “from an external focus on society to internal focus on the public library itself” and a similar shift from the user as a citizen with rights, to the user as a customer with individual preferences and needs that should be met. Based on the arguments in this study by most authors, there is an indication that provision of service to the library users is more important than charges on the services of the public library, as this practice will discourage the public library users. However, to enhance quality public library services, Public Libraries can engage in side investments such as: photocopy, production and or sales of writing materials, publishing and printing services etc.

## **Recommendations**

It was therefore recommended that:

- (1) Over reliance on government on funding Public Libraries should be disabused while other means of funding as earlier discussed should be embraced for effective and efficient information services delivery.
- (2) Staff of the Public Libraries should be regularly trained in the use of information and communication technologies for continual relevance.
- (3) Nigerian Government should include funding of Public Libraries in its budgets in order to revive public library services in Nigeria.
- (4) Favorable Government policies should be put in place to enable proper running of Public Libraries.

## **Conclusion**

From the above, the paper concluded that Public Libraries are made to serve a variety of people with diverse needs in the society without restrictions. Since knowledge is power and knowledge is embedded in books and other information materials, it is therefore imperative for Public Libraries to be well equipped by way of effective funding, the society will completely be transformed. This is because the society will be enlightened casting away illiteracy to grant room for literacy. Hence the conclusion is that there is need to properly fund Public Libraries through other means aside government intervention. This study also concluded that Public Libraries suffer or struggle to stay in existence because of the negligence of the government, its policies and the inability of the libraries to look out for alternative means of funding. Thus, it was concluded that Public Libraries should adopt alternative means to fund their services such as: library investments, like photocopy, publishing and printing services, rental services, advocacy, fundraising, invite donations, apply to international bodies or organizations and so on. In a computer age like ours, Public Libraries should be able to serve its users with innovative technologies such as the internet, social media, maker-space, especially for children all types of digital resources. The information resources of Public Libraries should also be digitized so as to facilitate the access of their resources online. Government should try their best to assist the

Public Libraries with adequate funding and formulation of policies for the library to remain relevant.

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