

# **LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE DIGEST**

**Journal of Nigerian Library Association, Anambra State Chapter**

**Volume 15, MAY, 2022**

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# THE POWER OF IMAGERIES IN COMMUNITY INFORMATION AND ENGAGEMENT: REPOSITIONING AUDIOVISUAL RESOURCES

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## Abstract

Audiovisual resources create special effect and enhance the facilitation of access to information. Librarians leverage on this and package information in desired format for rural community dwellers to engage them in effective service delivery. If audiovisual resources excite the city dwellers, the effect on rural communities is overwhelming. It stimulates learning and makes learning more concrete yet the use of multimedia in rural communities seems so elusive. This paper sought to highlight the power of audiovisual resources when integrated in engaging the rural communities for participation in sustainable development and national development, the benefits derived, challenges thereof, and charting a new way forward. These days, librarians take information to their users wherever they are. Librarians serving the rural community should consider that they have limited access to the Internet, cable TV network, electricity supply, and other amenities enjoyed by the city dwellers. Yet these rural dwellers are information savvy and value every piece of information provided to them. Thus connecting and engaging them with simple audiovisual resources would place librarians on the right path towards building sustainable and national development among the rural dwellers.

**Keywords:** *Audiovisual Resources, Imageries, Rural Dwellers, Community Information Engagement,, Sustainable Development, National Development.*

## Introduction

There seem to be a disconnect in rural library information service delivery in Nigeria. Rural communities are very important in national development because they encompass all groups of people, ranging from small business owners, farmers, fishermen, artisans, petty traders, retired people, civil servants, children, and people living with disability. These rural communities also have rich cultural heritage needed for sustainable development (Vassilakaki et al., 2019). Thus, they should be engaged to harness their rich cultural heritage for national development. It also improves the standard of living of the people as well as the open cordial relationship with the libraries. Here comes the value of audiovisual

resources to engage, connect, enable, inspire and enhance rural community dwellers' in accessing the right information from the right sources (IFLA, 2019). The integration of audiovisual resources in information service delivery ensures developed creativity, integrating learning, and sharing of the quality of community services among the librarians. This is what Emerald Group (2015) affirmed as today's constant evolution of sharing information as examples of good practices with peers for those working in librarianship.

The audio visuals (AVMs) can be divided into three mainly – the audio that gets to the hearing sensory organs which involves the radio, cassette

player, tele-lecture, CD, telephones, recording, music/sound, songs, visual aids in the form of PowerPoint presentations, video clippings, etc. The video resources can be viewed and observed with the eyes. They include silent films, charts, illustrated books, VCD, pictures, posters, maps, globes, drawings, models, and cartoons. Then the audiovisual – combines both audio and visual resources for stimulating learning experiences. They are television, film, motion picture, videotape, printed materials with recorded sound, demonstration, etc. (Library and Information Network, 2013; Ashikuzzaman, 2013). In the same vein Shamsideen, (2016) informed that audio relates to "hearing", visual is "seeing". Some librarians offer spaces, programs, and workshops to help colleagues package good resources for community members.

**The Rural Community Setting** Rural communities are those communities that are situated outside the city with limited basic amenities such as electricity supply, pipe borne water, good road network, telecommunication services, good schools and other basic amenities enjoyed in the urban areas. According to Dijkstra et al. (2020), the sectorial employment or provision of infrastructure and services is used to determine whether settlements should be classified as urban or rural. Usually, rural dwellers in African communities are disadvantaged educationally, economically, politically and in most cases made up of the aged and their children. In spite of all these, they form part of the society and needed in national development. When they are neglected, an important section of the society is neglected. Many city dwellers came out of these communities. It remains a source of identity for many people, especially in this part of the world, where everyone still goes back to his rural community to be part of town union development (Anaehobi & Osuchukwu, 2015). Thus their involvement in national development makes it imperative to make information engagement and audiovisual resources available to them for the attainment of an informed citizenry crucial for societal and national development (Anambra State Library Board Newsletter, 2018).

### **Incorporating Audiovisual Resources in Community Information Engagement**

Audiovisual resources are the non-book and non-print resources in the library that may be used in library with or without equipment. They come in different sizes, formats, makes and operations but the general thing about them is that they convey information and messages through the senses of hearing and seeing. **European Disability Forum (EDF)** (2020) pointed out that audiovisual media is vital in defining the cultural landscape of modern societies and provide a primary source of information, education and entertainment, from which persons with disabilities shall not be excluded. The need to incorporate audiovisual resources in library and information services in rural communities is to improve service delivery and the life of the people socially, economically and otherwise. Affirming this, ALA (2018) presented the review of standards found in the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Guide to Policies and Procedures which recommended community college, college and university libraries and guidelines that represent best practices to develop media collections, services and programs relevant to the library user communities. In other words, librarians must adopt proactive approaches to the provision of effective audiovisual resources. Thus, if librarians cannot genuinely package audiovisual resources nor facilitate access to information in rural areas across the country, then the quality assurance attached to their ethics is questionable.

Expectedly, libraries should include locally produced art, music, writing and performances as part of the library collections for community engagement. They use a variety of means to communicate what is available in the library, as well as to encourage citizens to engage in programs and services which their communities offer. According to Smith (2019) libraries are evolving, leaning outside of our walls, and connecting with our communities in new and powerful ways. Boise State University (2015) called it taking every dedication, focus and innovation to remain relevant with the best practices while keeping the communities alive with the desired information.

Studies have shown that engagement can be strategically targeted for joint programs as well as creating safe spaces for every member of the community. For instance, the creation of these spaces allows for new innovative programs like drawing, painting and classes (Anambra State Library Board Newsletter, 2018; Mersand et al, 2019). This could place librarians in the right position of leading information and knowledge processes. Simply, audiovisual resources, in libraries create together maker spaces, fab labs and design studios, where patrons of all ages build, explore and learn designs.

### **Benefits of Audiovisual Resources in Rural Community Engagement**

There are several benefits of using audiovisual resources in rural community engagement. These include:

#### **Advocacy**

Audiovisual resources are keys to advocacy in the communities. With audiovisuals, the stakeholders understand fast and reason with the librarians on the use of the library sustainable development of their communities. Verbal talk, only, cannot produce the desired result with audiovisuals. Thus, creating posters of libraries, images of community services, local musical interludes and skill acquisition centres will endear the use of library to the rural dwellers. This implies that proactive librarians should have good approaches to advocacy, communication, data analysis, creativity, critical thinking, leadership, project management, and technological expertise among others (Schwartz, 2016).

#### **Facilitation of Access to Information**

The use of audiovisual services for rural dwellers that need information on several aspects of life like livelihood, agriculture, trade, microcredit, community health and development, requires well-packaged information resources filled with relevant sounds and imageries. It could involve packaging it in local languages with designed fliers and leaflets while bearing in mind the library's relevance as it relates to that rural community.

### **Marketing of libraries and Information Centres**

Every good marketing aims to impress and attract. Audiovisual resources provide one of the best marketing mix. Rural dwellers are close to nature. Jingles could be composed with the local instrument; mother tongue and the content designed to address their information needs on agriculture, micro credit loans, seedlings, farm equipment, use of ICT in displaying their products. These are aimed at drawingl draw their quick attention to the library. Clearly, these strategies are ways of marketing libraries and information services in the communities (Madu et al., 2018).

#### **Health Information**

The fact that community dwellers need health information as much as the city dwellers make audiovisual resources the best bet for that engagement. Engagement strategy in this regard may involve the use of pictures, posters, power point presentation, audio recordings, music, public address system, and simulation, among others. **Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA) (2020) stated that in** Health Literacy Universal Precautions, videos are particularly effective way to demonstrate self-care activities such as injecting insulin, using an inhaler, or exercising. Clearly, the picture of a child with diarrhoea or measles, a pregnant woman without medicare, immunization announcement, and prevention of epidemics and pandemics are better done with audiovisual resources.

#### **Civic education**

Audio visual resources are needed in educating the rural populace to create inclusive national development, information on governance, citizenship, obligations of the people, contribution and participation. Pictures and graphics can be used to show the citizenry can participate in community development. AVs help in showing the levels of government and the different governmental structure. In support of this, Anaehobi and Osuchukwu (2015) recommended a strong call for librarians to understand local issues and support rural dwellers to connect with the local government administrators and social agencies in addressing their needs.

### **Literacy activities**

The lack of community libraries in many rural communities and schools makes the use of AVs the needed service in promoting literacy activities. The pictures and sounds add value to reading and learning. The use of charts like alphabets, parts of the body, arithmetics, picture books and other pictorial learning resources (National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) 2021). Studies have shown that many community school children do not have the ability to read while many more do not own storybooks. Their parents may or may not buy them textbooks. When libraries visit these communities monthly or quarterly to allow them free access and utilization of these audiovisual resources, it affords them the opportunity to build their minds, widen horizon and inspire more learning. When citizens learn, they develop the mindset that will help them participate in nation building. Librarians through the library resources help the rural community in this aspect.

### **Inclusion of Persons with Disability**

Sound is the most natural source of information (San Diego State University Library, 2020) for persons living with visual impairment. Depending on the nature of disability, the radio and other sound recordings could be explored as vehicle for the communication of information to persons living with disabilities (PWDs) in rural communities. Such persons face marginalization in the society. Some of them do not have the opportunity of going to school of the blind. But with information sharing and engagement through AVM, they can appreciate the gift of life and become creative in their own ways. Other AVMs like projectors and slides are good avenues of reaching out to persons with hearing impairment and the physically challenged. The European Disability Forum (EDF) (2020), stated that the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities includes the right to “enjoy access to television programmes in accessible format” (Article 30). Again the integration of audio visual in rural community enhances self-reflection and helps teachers to develop their competencies in special education in disabilities and children with special needs (Sediyani et al., 2017). They need to be treated like others

because they are members of the society. Thus, the library owe them this duty of care.

### **Leisure and Relaxation**

Because many communities do have regular power nor access to cable TV or access to entertainment, TVs and videos for recreating relaxation and leisure, the libraries can offer these services to them (Oghenetega et al., 2015). It has been said that libraries can offer both social and humanitarian services. Putting smiles on the faces of marginalized and excluded persons is one of the beautiful gifts to humanity. For a group that has never owned television or video, for a group that has never watched a movie, for children that have never known the joy of children's movies and cartoons, AVs do the job excitedly while inspiring the younger ones to grow beyond the limit of rural communities and develop their people. This offer increases the life span and brings respect to the librarians. Such services can take place during festive periods like Christmas, the holiday period, etc.

### **Promotion of community and global events**

Libraries that understand the power of audiovisual resources have used audiovisual resources to celebrate community events like new yam festivals, age-grade celebrations, new moon, community day etc. They have also promoted world events like the international day of women, indigenous people, mother tongues, human rights, etc. Films have been streamed on related events with displays of beautiful arts and crafts on cultural heritage. The libraries have also partnered with the village groups in joint activities on local events that project their indigenous knowledge in ways that mix and match with colours.

### **Challenges of audio-visual resources in information engagement**

#### **Inadequacy of trained personnel**

Many librarians do not have the capacity to operate technological tools used in information dissemination. Perhaps, they do not have the capacity to organize media resources, as well as manage and render services with them. Probably, they need regular training, learning and re-learning in handling AVMs. Fear of the unknown on the part of professionals has hindered the use of audio visual resources in

community information engagement. This fear could be technophobia (Madu et al., 2018).

**Organization and utilization of non-print materials:**

There are challenges in providing access to audiovisual and proper utilization of audio visual resources. For instance, when the audio visual resources are not classified and given proper identification for monitoring and safe keeping, it creates problems. When they are carelessly handled by the users and librarians without proper packaging in their jackets, they spoil easily.

**Funds/Budget allocation:** Using AVM in libraries is capital intensive. Many libraries more especially government libraries are facing budgetary cut which affect the effective and efficient use of AVMs for engagement in rural setting.

**Copyrights and Licensing:** Some AVMs are under copyright license which prevent their free usage in information service delivery. For example, some AVMs contain time-limited rights or sponsored rights (Dumitrache & Anghel, 2012) The copyright restriction is a major challenge which affect rural library service delivery.

**Misplacement of priority:** The use of audiovisual materials in community engagement seems not to have received priority attention. This neglect pushes its use to the background while other resources like books are given more attention. Thus it will not likely attract any positive placement and retention in rural community engagement.

**Staffing:** Many libraries complain of low staffing and excess workload. The use of AVM in libraries requires specialised skills. From personal experience, not many library staff know how to use AVM. Thus lack of skilled manpower affect the use of AVM in community engagement.

**Non-provision of audiovisual units and infrastructural facilities:** AVMs require enough

space because some of them are heavy and stationery. Ideally, AVM should have a unit dedicated to its use. It is sad to note that many libraries and institutions do not create units or sections for audiovisual resources (Oghenetega & Amugen, 2014). This affects community library engagement.

**Erratic power supply:** The use of some AVM require regular power supply. It is a common knowledge in Nigeria, that electricity power supply is not steady. This hinders the use of some AVM like the computer, television, CD /DVD player.. Nigeria is known for erratic power supply (Ojobor et al., 2020). Similarly, low current damages some AVMs. Indeed a library needs its own standby generator to enable it discharge its duties, maximally. Low current can contribute to the breakdown of some AV resources and as a result, hamper the advantages they offer.

**Foreign exchange constraints:** Most audiovisual materials are imported and bought with foreign currency. With the budget cut in libraries and the rising exchange rate, it is very difficult to procure reliable AVMs for the library.

**The way forward**

Librarians must identify with rural library services in their host communities and include them in their programs. They should integrate themselves with the social life of the community to know when they have meetings, dates for their cultural activities. Such information will help them to organize library materials that will add value to such programmes.

They can collaborate with the community stakeholders to provide fliers in the local language of the people as well as compose jingles and music that suit the culture of the people. Librarians must learn and build their capacities in the application, management and structuring of audiovisual resources like drawing cartoons, painting, etc. There is no strict rule on audiovisual resources. The important thing is to have an alternative resource reading material that will impact the same value.

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