

*Article***AVAILABILITY AND USE OF RESOURCES AND SERVICES OF  
PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN ANAMBRA STATE****Peter Nnamdi Ibe**

Nnewi Divisional Library, Nnewi

**[Peteribe425@yahoo.com](mailto:Peteribe425@yahoo.com)****Abstract**

*This study investigated the available and use of the resources and services of public libraries of Anambra State. The descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised of two hundred and twenty respondents accidentally sampled during visits of the research questions guided the study. Checklist and documentary analysis of statistical records, as well as structured questionnaire were instruments adopted for the study. Tables, frequencies and percentages were used in the analysis. Major findings of the study were as follows: There are both human and material resources in the public Libraries, but no internet resources, less than 5% of Anambra State population patronize the public libraries, Onitsha Public Library is the most patronized while Amichi Public Library is the least patronized, consultation and patronage tend to be more in the urban areas than the rural areas, challenges included poor reading culture of the people, lack of awareness, lack of internet resources, unconducive environment, economic situation and lack of current books. Based on the findings and conclusion, the study recommended among others, Internet connection, public enlightenment programmes on public libraries, provision of modern facilities especially, in the rural area, relocation of the noisy libraries, as well as increased funding of the Public Libraries.*

## **Introduction**

The public library is the library established to cater for the educational and information needs of a social rendezvous for community interactions and leisure. According to Ozuluonye (2006), the public library is the library established by the state to provide information and materials for various groups of users like civil servants, businessmen and students etc, and exists to serve all members of the public. It is the people's university. As the people's university, the educational roles of the public library translate to societal development at all levels and is unarguable quite distinguished and wider in scope than that of other type of libraries. Education is the greatest investment any nation can make for the quick development of its economic, political, social, as well as human resources and the public library is the agency that is well positioned and statutorily empowered to deliver in these respects without discrimination. The public library is the last resort for the common man, making it possible for people without education to get educated and the educated to update continuously. According to Gambari (2000), libraries do not only organize and provide documents and items of information; they also filter knowledge and extract the more useful from the less useful. Madison, cited in Akinola (1989) stated that education purveys knowledge and knowledge will forever govern ignorance.

To effectively perform the afore-mentioned educational roles and impart needed knowledge, the public library has both human and material resources like books, newspapers, magazines, indexes, abstracts, encyclopedia, directories, Do-it-yourself manuals, personnel, among others. They provide services in diverse forms such as reference, circulation, lending, among others in order to satisfy diverse needs and interests of users. It is by using the public library resources and services that the expected education development and societal transformation are hoped to be attained.

In Anambra State, there are eleven public libraries scattered throughout the State. According to National Population Commission Census Figure (2006). Anambra State has a population of four million, one hundred and eighty-two thousand and thirty-two (4,182,032). The State has twenty-one local government areas and the public libraries are located in ten out of the twenty one local government areas. The public libraries are located in Ihembosi, Ozubulu, Amichi, Nnewi, Ajalli, Nkpologwu, Abagana, Onitsha, Adazi-Nnukwu, Ifite-Dunu, and Atani in Ekwusigo, Nnewi South, Nnewi North, Orumba North, Aguata, Njikoka, Onitsha North, Anaocha local government area respectively.

It is therefore, very vivid that Anambra State is well on track in her commitment to eradicate illiteracy among the populace by opening these public libraries. However, it is only when the resources and services are there and are utilized by members of the public that the expected educational objective will be attained. The questions that bordered the researcher were as follows: - Are there necessary resources and services in these public libraries as required? What is the position as regards patronage and utilization of these resources and services? There is no comprehensive data to take care of these crucial issues, hence, this study on availability and use of the resources and services of public libraries of Anambra State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Public library is the people's university (Ozuluomge, 2006). It takes care of educational, as well as informational needs of the general public and ought to provide resources and services that will help achieve a more educationally sound and informed society. It is by using the resources and services of the public libraries that is educational objective overall development will be attained. The prevalence of many social vices and widespread illiteracy among the populace posed great concern to the researcher as follows: are there necessary resources and services in the public libraries of Anambra State to help attain objective of setting up the public libraries? If there are resources and services, are they utilized by members of the public for which they are meant for? The inability to clarify the aforementioned issues will no doubt spell doom for the educational development of the state, as well as bring more ills to the society. This study is an attempt to clarify those issues by investigating availability and use of the resources and services of public libraries of Anambra State.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the availability and usage of the resources and services of public libraries in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the resources and services available in public libraries in Anambra State.
2. Determine the patronage of the resources and services by patrons.
3. Identify possible challenges to effective use of the resources by patrons.
4. Proffer possible strategies that will facilitate patronage of the resources.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study was deemed significant to the Anambra State Library Board who is the policymakers. Through the findings of this study, the policymakers will be in position to know how best to plan for public library development in the State. This study was also deemed significant to the State Government. Through the findings of this study, the State Government will be better advised empirically, to know its shortcomings as regards public library development and channel needed financial resources for library development, create necessary awareness on importance of public libraries to the citizens of the State so as revitalize the libraries.

### **Research Questions**

Four research questions guided this study in line with the purpose of study as follows:-

1. What are the resources and services available in the public libraries in Anambra State?
2. What is the nature of patronage of the resources and services?
3. What are the challenges to effective use of the library resources by patrons?
4. What are the possible strategies for enhancing the patronage of resources and services of public libraries in Anambra State?

### **Literature Review**

Ozuluonye (2006) defined public library as the library established by the state to provide information and materials for various groups of users like civil servants, businessmen, students, children and all members of the public. Public library services are those jobs performed by public libraries for the benefit of general public whom they are meant to serve. According to Ozuluonye (2006), the first duty of public library is to satisfy the reading needs of individuals and which they do through the provision of stock, provision of services and the provision of accommodation. Services of the public library do not comprise only lending, reading and reference services, they also comprise library publication, assistance to readers and cultural display. According to Achebe (2008), basic functions of most public library to users include: guidance in locating materials, provision of reference and information service, provision of booklists, operation of book exhibition and provision of books and other materials to schools. They also include provision of telephone information service, guidance in reading and instruction in the use of books, photocopy services, skills training of users on ICT, literacy and trade skill acquisition.

The Advanced Learners Dictionary (2006) defined resource as something that can be used to help achieve an aim, especially a book, equipment etc that provide information for teachers and students. Public library resources therefore, encompass all the library information materials like chairs, tables, catalogue cabinet as well as personnel.

Most of the time, there are cases of non-patronage of public libraries. According to Uwem (2008), a lot of factors contribute to poor patronage of public libraries resource and services. The factors include prevalence of illiteracy among the population and problem of oral tradition which facilitate lack of interest in using the public libraries modeled after the Whiteman's tradition. According to Nwokocha (2002), factors against patronage of public libraries include poor funding, personnel problems, poor reading culture and oral tradition. Udeze (2008) identified such factors like unconducive reading environment occasional by poor location of most libraries. According to *Sun News Online* (2008), hardship and economic situation of the country also contribute to poor patronage of public libraries as people become so overburdened with many things so as to survive and hardly have time to read or visit the libraries.

Strategies towards improving patronage of public libraries include sustained public relations/awareness creation and proper funding (Nwokocha, 2002; Zorostor, 2006; Karntumonya, 1992; Uwem, 2008). According to Udeze (2008), employment of more qualified staff, better location for public libraries, as well as enhanced salaries for staff will go a long way in facilitating patronage of its public libraries resources and services.

### **Methodology**

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A total of two hundred and twenty (220) respondents were accidentally sampled from the libraries during peak days when almost all the libraries usually record high turnout of users on ratio of twenty per library. The researcher employed the use of observation checklist, interview and documentary analysis of statistical records of the libraries to answer research questions A and B, and developed structured questionnaire to elicit answers from the respondents in respect of research question C and D. Tables frequencies and percentages were adopted in the analysis. Items with value 50% and above were positively interpreted, while items valued below 50% were negatively interpreted.

## Findings

**Research Question 1:** What are the resources and services available in public libraries in Anambra State?

**Table 1: Resources of Public Libraries in Anambra State**

Resources	Ozubulu	Ihembosi	Nnewi	Amichi	Nkpologwu	Atani	Ifite dunu	Onitsha	Abagana	Ajali	Adazi	Total
<b>Staff</b>	4	4	10	5	6	5	15	15	9	4	6	83
<b>Book stock</b>	6,260	8,051	16,360	3,456	8,480	6,770	18,680	21,600	9,620	11800	9,216	120,293
<b>Shelves</b>	10	9	16	6	8	7	7	30	16	6	7	122
<b>Chairs</b>	50	48	75	22	55	60	60	160	60	50	48	688
<b>Tables</b>	12	16	13	9	10	15	20	40	25	12	12	184
<b>Newspaper Rack</b>	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	2	14
<b>Magazine Stand Rack</b>	1	2	4	1	1	1	1	4	2	1	1	19
<b>Encyclopedia</b>	4	11	8	1	3	2	6	12	8	2	4	61
<b>Catalogue cabinet</b>	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	19
<b>Journals</b>	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	2	13	21
<b>Newspapers</b>	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	5	18
<b>Magazines</b>	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	4	15

**Table II: Services available at the public libraries**

Services Available	Ozubulu	Ihembosi	Nnewi	Amichi	Nkpologwu	Atani	Ifite dunu	Onitsha	Abagana	Ajali	Adazi	Total
<b>Lending</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Indexing</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Reference</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Internet</b>	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

The Anambra State public libraries have a total of 83 members of staff, one hundred and twenty-two (122) shelves, six hundred and eighty-eight (688) chairs, one hundred and eighty-four (184) tables, fourteen (14) Newspaper racks, nineteen (19) magazine stand, sixty-one (61) sets of encyclopedia, nineteen (19) catalogue cabinets, twenty-one (21) journals, eighteen (18) daily supply of newspapers, and fifteen (15) weekly supply of magazines.

Observation checklist shows that all the libraries have human and material resources, but no Internet resources. It also revealed that while Onitsha has the highest resources, Amichi Library has the least. Table II shows that all the libraries render lending, indexing and reference services, but none has Internet services.

**Research Question 2:** What is the position as regards patronage of the resources and services of the libraries?

**Table III: Statistics of readership in the public libraries 2005-2009**

YEAR	Ozubulu	Ihembosi	Nnewi	Amichi	Nkpologwu	Atani	Ifite dunu	Onitsha	Abagana	Ajali	Adazi	Total
2009	6,053	1,626	69,818	942	4,650	2080	2088	81,941	6,720	5,895	4,780	186,593
2008	2,749	1,920	51,774	1,062	4,780	3,940	3,575	80,606	6,658	5880	6,595	169,539
2007	3,270	1,840	55,420	749	6,559	3,860	5,605	82,570	5,990	5,275	5,607	76,745
2006	5,024	3,230	56,402	1,520	5,480	1,740	3,472	78,095	7,568	5,472	5,888	173,891
2005	4,618	3,825	61,330	1,240	4,980	3,275	4,857	81,205	6,025	5,786	4,952	182,093

**Table IV: Registered users of the public libraries, 2005-2009**

YEAR	Ozubulu	Ihembosi	Nnewi	Amichi	Nkpologwu	Atani	Ifite dunu	Onitsha	Abagana	Ajali	Adazi	Total
2009	2	4	63	3	6	4	6	72	24	8	6	198
2008	3	5	39	3	8	6	9	80	20	12	6	191
2007	6	5	45	2	7	6	12	78	18	9	5	193
2006	2	13	40	4	4	5	15	59	16	12	5	175
2005	6	8	42	2	6	4	12	55	12	12	4	163

**Table V: Newspaper consultation in the public libraries, 2005-2009**

YEAR	Ozubulu	Ihembosi	Nnewi	Amichi	Nkpologwu	Atani	Ifite dunu	Onitsha	Abagana	Ajali	Adazi	Total
2009	2,860	4,200	6,906	302	3,750	2,800	3,035	11,620	4,960	4,830	5650	50,913
2008	3,240	3,300	7,948	430	4,060	1,030	2,860	9,480	5,213	4,600	5490	47,657
2007	1,500	4,501	8,095	257	4,770	1,430	3,200	12,060	7,400	3,700	6,666	53,579
2006	700	3,800	6,900	420	3,457	1,380	2,069	7,460	5,130	3,400	5,613	40,329
2005	800	1,021	4,051	500	2000	850	2,080	6,845	6,845	3,000	5,620	33,612

**Table VI: Magazine consultation in the public libraries, 2005-2009**

YEAR	Ozubulu	Ihembosi	Nnewi	Amichi	Nkpologwu	Atani	Ifite dunu	Onitsha	Abagana	Ajali	Adazi	Total
2009	Nil	384	670	Nil	140	80	240	860	413	141	14	2942
2008	Nil	400	271	Nil	280	45	230	855	408	260	18	2767
2007	430	341	340	17	392	130	220	825	340	360	Nil	3395
2006	480	3230	375	180	120	115	180	678	360	271	Nil	3089
2005	416	340	520	78	130	95	178	515	350	345	Nil	2967

Table III shows readership position in the public libraries for the year 2005-2009 as follows:- 182, 093, 173, 891, 176, 745, 169, 539 and 186, 593 respectively. This shows a very low patronage of the public libraries in Anambra State. Table IV shows registered users in the whole public libraries for the years 2005-2009 as follows: 163,175, 193, 191, and 198 respectively. This shows that people rarely register to borrow books from the libraries. Table V shows, total newspaper consultation in the libraries for the years 2005-2009 as follows: 33, 612; 40,329; 53,579; 47,651 and 50,913. Table VI shows total magazine consultation in the eleven public libraries for the years 2005-2009 as follows: 29.67, 30.89, 33; 95, 27.6 and 29.42, respectively.

### Research Question 3

**Table V: Challenges to effective use of library resources**

S/No	Challenges	F	%
1	Poor reading culture	160	72.73%
2	Illiteracy	80	36.36%
3	Conducive environment	138	62.73%
4	Economic situation	120	54.55%
5	Funding	180	81.82%
6	Attitude of staff	60	27.27%
7	Lack of awareness	200	90.91%
8	Lack of internet	175	79.55%
9	Lack of current books	164	74.55%



The respondents were requested to indicate their agreement or otherwise with the above items as challenges to effective patronage of public library resources. The table indicates that the respondents assented to poor reading culture, unconducive learning environment, economic situation funding problems, lack of awareness of public libraries, lack of internet and lack of current books as capable of working against patronage of public library resources and services. They also disagree with illiteracy of the people and attitude of staff as possible factors against patronage.

#### Research Question 4

**Table VI: Strategies for enhancing patronage of public library resources and services**

S/No	Strategies	F	%
1	Proper	126	57.27%
2	Provision of current materials	180	81.82%
3	Improved funding of the libraries	176	80%
4	Relocation of the libraries to more serene areas	164	74.55%
5	Awareness creation/ public enlightenment programmes	194	88.18%
6	Internet connectivity	200	90.91%

The respondents were required to indicate their agreement or otherwise with the above measures as capable of boosting patronage of public library resources. The table shows that the respondents agreed to all the measures as capable of enhancing patronage of public library resources and services.

#### Summary of Findings and Conclusion

There are both human and material resources in the public libraries of Anambra State, but no audio-visual and internet resources in the libraries. Less than 5% of Anambra State population use the resources and services available in the public libraries. Onitsha Divisional Library is the most patronized public library in the state, while Amichi public library is the least patronized.

Consultation tends to be more in the urban areas than in the local areas. Such challenges like poor reading culture, unconducive environment, reading economic situation, funding, lack of awareness of duties and roles of public libraries, lack of internet resources and lack of current books were seen to be militating against effective patronage of library resources.

Such measures like proper orientation and staff motivation, provision of current books and internet resources, improved funding, relocation of some of the libraries to more serene areas, awareness creation/public enlightenment programmes were seen as capable of improving patronage of the public library resources and services.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study.

- The management of the public libraries should expedite action on equipping the libraries with internet resources. This has the potential to lure more users to the libraries.
- The management of the libraries, policymakers and the State Government should embark on aggressive public enlightenment programmes to educate the people on the need for the use of public libraries. This is because many people are not aware of the existence of public libraries and what they stand for.
- Attention should be shifted to development of public libraries in the rural communities, especially by provision of modern facilities. This has dual capability of developing the rural libraries, as well as arresting rural-urban drift prevalent among the youths.
- The management of the libraries and other stakeholders should make effort to relocate those public libraries that are located in the markets and very noisy streets so as to guarantee conducive reading environment.
- The State Government should increase funding of the public libraries in the State. This is because most of the laudable programmes capable of boosting public library services need proper funding.

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