Sustaining Nigeria's Democracy: Public Libraries as Indispensable Instrument in Anambra State

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Abstract

A survey of the historical and contemporary facts and figures presents Nigeria as a Nation battling to entrench the values of democracy. Much remains to be done to reinforce this progress and prepare the nation for the political realities of democracy in the 21st Century. The citizens need to be enlightened and informed to actively participate in the democratic process. The role of the library as a social utility institution in this respect is indispensable and significant. The paper examined the public library as an agent of social and political transformation in Anambra State. It reviewed the services, activities, resources, manpower and facilities offered to position it for the political re-engineering required for democracy to be sustained. The population of the study covered the State public library and it's seven divisional libraries in Anambra State. The respondents included library users and staff. Questionnaire, oral interview and participants observation were instruments used for data collection. The result of the investigation revealed that the public libraries' potentials if adequately harnessed will serve as a catalyst and dynamic force for a pervasive and complete cultural and political revolution capable of nurturing the psychosocial and political new dawn of individuals, the clan, the community and the entire nation. The findings indicates that current awareness programmes, information repackaging, and community based services of the public libraries are not viable though they are instruments for reaching out to the remote areas for increasing civic information awareness. However, paucity of funds, inadequate manpower development, high rate of illiteracy, lack of basic infrastructure, inadequate policy formulation/implementation and socio-cultural factors were highlighted as hindrances to the success of these ideals. Recommendations include among others, restructuring of the public libraries through increased funding, ICT and man power development, creating awareness and review of the policies affecting public library systems in Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

The etymology of the word "Democracy" comes from Greek words "demos" meaning "people" and "kratos" meaning "power". In Greece the people met in one place to make laws for their community but today because people can no longer gather like that, they practice representative democracy where members of the society are elected to represent the society in the council, legislative or parliament in decision making and legal issues. Democracy implies that the citizens   must participate in governance through their freely elected representatives and promotion of basic rights of citizens (Omotala, 2009). This form of governance by elected representatives is referred to as Democratic Republic or Republican government (Jemo: 2008), Democracy is a global phenomena which is practiced in various countries of the world. Jega (2006) as cited by Mbah (2007) indicated the following constituent elements of a liberal democratic tradition:

❖   Representation: "freedom to choose". People choosing their representatives through periodic "free and fair" elections.
❖   Participation: getting involved. "People being involved in choosing representatives and in determining their affairs"
❖   Responsive and representative/accountable governance: delivery of services that efficiently and effectively satisfy the needs and expectations of the people; which maximize pleasure and minimize pains to a greater number of people.
❖   Equality before the law; rule of law, fairness and justice.
❖   Transparency and accountability in public conduct.

    He categorically maintained that the level of Democracy of a political system was dependent on the extent to which it allowed the freedoms to exist. Eliagwu (2004:20) as cited in Mbah (2007: 152) agrees with him on these basic features of a democracy while Guaba (2003:425) as quoted in Mbah (2007:153) explained that for democracy to be sustained certain principles, mechanisms and institutions must be maintained. They include government by consent, public accountability, majority rule, recognition of minority rights and constitutional government. Democracy is a government in which policies and actions are to a larger extent determined by the general will and popular majority. The beauty of democracy is made apparent in the observance of the rule of law. Today, democracy which is a global phenomenon has become the yardstick for measuring good governance in the various geographical locations/countries including Nigeria and other African countries. In fact, the Western democracies, the USA, the World Bank have insisted that one of the conditions for obtaining assistance and aid for Africa is the level of application of democratic principles and ideals. According to Nnoli (2003) Democracy as a form of government entails the freedom of the individual in many

respects-political freedom, equality among citizens, justice in the relations between the people and the government and the participation of the people in choosing those in government. Stressing this "freedom" further Jemo (2008) states that citizens in an ideal democracy are entitled to equal protection of their persons, possessions and rights, equal rights of political participation; freedom from undue interference and domination by government. Freedom within the ambit of the law to belief/views, to expression, of association, to work and live where they choose, arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, of worship/religion. Political freedom and participation implies that they will be free to choose their representative (electoral choice) in a process characterized by free and fair elections and the electorate can question government decisions through their elected representatives (rights) in parliament without fear of intimidation. Basic features of democracy could be summed up as: there must be free and fare elections, recognition of majority rule and minority rights, existence of political parties, constitutional government (rule of law), and participation of private organizations without government interference.

Democracy in Nigeria

Democratization is the total processes involved in the entrenchment of the culture of democracy-liberalizing the political space, institutionalizing the voting rights, permitting dissent, allowing negotiation among plural groups, associational life and respect for human rights. It is these lofty ideologies that Nigeria set out in 1960 to entrench and consolidate after independence. It is obvious that democracy is shaped by historical forces and the contemporary socio-economic circumstances of each country (Mbah,2007:151). The five democratic objectives for Nigeria as cited by Agbodike (1992:253) include:

- ❖ a united, strong and self-reliant nation.
- ❖ a great and dynamic economy.
- ❖ a just and egalitarian society.
- ❖ a land of bright and full opportunities for all its citizens.

Nigeria, a heterogeneous, multiethnic and post colonial new nation emerging into democracy still bore the trappings of the British colonial past which to a large extent shaped the democratization process. She adopted the parliamentary system expecting nation building, economic development and political stability but as was the case of the bulk of post colonial states in Africa the democracy experiments in Nigeria has proved a woeful disappointment (Onyishi, 2007:193; Choiruzaad, 2001.)

In fact, the country has witnessed so much economic and socio political problems resulting from the lip service paid to issues pertaining to democracy. Mbah (2007: 149) points out that Nigeria's democracy lacked the socio cultural and political nexus required for its sustainability. Genuine democracy is good governance for all the people which inspires confidence in the populace (Okunna, 2011:80). Mbah (2007) and Onyishi (2007) reiterate that democracy in Nigeria is not moving towards this end. The nascent democratic dispensation in Nigeria has been characterized by lack of respect for the basic rights and freedoms of its citizens. Governments have been tyrannical with their usurpation of the rule of law and infringement of the rights of the citizens who live in abject poverty. The democratic progress which has been made are crippled by severe structural problems like corruption, weak law enforcement, lack of respect for citizens rights, liberty and participation which are essentials of a successful democratic process are lacking. There is mockery of electoral laws, exclusivity, elitism, executive highhandedness, disdain for popular debate of public issues and antidemocratic features of arrogance. Our political framework is inundated with brazen show of uncivilized attitudes of uncultured and ill mannered politicians who rig elections, steal ballot boxes falsify results, bribe the electorate (Onyishi 2007: 199). Political parties force candidates on the electorates since there are no independent candidates. The legislature and law are foisted with money bag politicians who do not make laws to benefit the citizens but themselves, the orgy of looting and embezzlement is scandalous. The government is not accountable to itself or the citizens. Transparency has been thrown to the wind. Intolerance, downright personalization of public positions abound, sit tight in power syndrome, annulment of free and fair elections, questionable impeachment of elected officers from power, total abuse of office by political class and public office holders, politics is now a family affair running from parents to children and siblings to siblings, personal agrandisement and godfatherism is the order of the day. The judiciary is not independent. The moribund political structure calls for an immediate transformation to avoid chaos and disintegration of the Nigerian state (Mbah, 2007).This situation has degenerated to a level where the citizens show apathy and lack of concern in the political system. This apathy Okunna (2001:78) pointed out could be attributed to the people's lack of access to the relevant information to enlighten them on goings-on in their society to enable them participate in the public debate as required for the operation of democracy. The role of the librarian and other information gate- keepers such as (the press), become very indispensable in providing and making information accessible to ensure free flow of information and developing an informed citizenry. Jemo (2008) emphasized that there is need for the citizens to be equipped with the right information to participate in the democratic process and eradicate social problems. But how can this be for a country which until recently did not have freedom of information (FOI) law. A bill which value in

advancing the practice and ideals of democracy is incotestable (Ogunshola; 2011).

Public Libraries
The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1995) states that "the public library shall in principle be free of charge and services should be provided on the basis of equality of access for all regardless of age, race, gender religion, nationality, language or social status". In order to provide equality of access, specific services and materials must be provided for those users who for whatever reason cannot use the regular services and materials e.g. linguistic minorities, people with disabilities, in hospital or prison. Public libraries are publicly funded libraries open to anyone who wants to use them. Adimorah (1983); Kerslake and Kinnel (1998), Agbodike (1992), Osuigwe and Udeze (2010), Osuigwe, Jiagbogu and Udeze 2011 indicate that public libraries reflect their social, economic and political environment. The information age emphasizes the empowerment of all through access to and use of information and considering the fact that it is only the informed citizen that can participate in democracy effectively, the public library which mission is to facilitate access to information and resources in a variety of media to its community serves as a veritable instrument in this respect. Its objectives for Africa as stated by the UNESCO seminar of 1953 on Public Library Development (cited by Agbodike, 1992):

To support and reinforce programmes of adult and fundamental education.
To provide effective services for children and young people, including requisite services for school.
To provide needed information and reference services.
To promote and stimulate reading for pleasure and recreation.
To provide, whenever needed language groups in order to ensure availability of resources on equal terms to all members of the community.

This position of public libraries is global for they cover information provision, research, cultural and recreational interest through various services, activities, programmes and provision of resources in both print and non print formats. It is established for the purposes of educational, social, economic and political development of mankind. Its services, resources and facilities should suit the local needs of its communities and users.

Public library development in Nigeria originated from its humble beginning of the Tom Jones library in Lagos in 1910. Nwegbu, Echezona and Okafor (2012) reports that from 1940s rural library services of the public libraries included extention services to rural areas through mobile library services, bookbox services and libraries on boats. At present public libraries are found in most of our urban towns and in the remote villages and communities in form of public libraries and their divisional libraries and community libraries/ community service centres. Public libraries in Anambra State as reported by Osuchukwu (2010) include the State Central Library located at Ifite-Dunu with 3 divisional libraries in Onitsha, Nnewi and Abagana. Its other branches/community libraries are located at Amichi, Ihembosi, Ozubulu, Ajalli, Adazi Nnukwu, Nkpologwu and Atani.

LITERATURE REVIEW
PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND DEMOCRACY
Vogel (2011) describes the library as the "ultimate democratic institution" which provides you with a dozen experts better versed than "Google" in locating what you need from an enormous store of books, magazines, newspapers, DVDs, videos, CDs, pictures, government documents, pamphlets, websites and microfiche while Ian (2011) corroborates this assertion pointing out that librarians are a vital element in a democracy more so in the information age-an age characterized by so much wealth of information that an average person cannot navigate through. "Information is the lifeblood of democracy"states (Ogunshola; 2011:7) and the public librarians are there requesting its users to take anyone of their millions of volumes for free. The public library makes information accessible to all without any barriers. Vogel (2011) indicates that all you need is your ID (Identity Card) and you are in. Libraries have evolved into information centres -information in forms beyond those big volumes. Presently widespread access is ensured. Establishing the place of public library in liberal democracies, He pointed out that:

These are places for people who want to know; libraries nationwide have a steady increase in patronage since at least 1990. They hold a special and sentimental place in the mind of the citizenry and are widely regarded as institutions where browsing and borrowing lead to meaningful knowledge …Libraries are fundamental institutions in a democracy.

In a study from the Marist Institute for Public Opinion on Americans rating of their local public library 2003, reported by Vogel (2011) 94% rated their library as "very valuable" or "valuable" and majority were willing to pay higher taxes to support their public libraries. These values are attributed to the importance of libraries in promoting the information required for active self governance which is a sine quo non for democracy to be alife.

Public libraries also make accessible information resources which facilitates reading leading to imaginative growth and attention that fertilizes both private and public life. Attainment of higher education

through reading also mitigates prejudice, meddling and pettiness while increasing support for civil liberties required for a free, innovative or productive society. Corroborating this assertion, Osuigwe, etal (2012) state that it is a vital part of the civilized society. Libraries among other institutions like the media, the judiciary have defended access to all kinds of information, ensure intellectual freedom for democracy to thrive. They also provide information for cultural awareness and social integration. The idea of public libraries all over the world was encapsulated in this description of the Minneapolis public library as "a civic pride … a few stations of government that is open to all, helps us to become better people and improves society… a basic pillar of democracy" which will introduce the radical poor into a culture of decency and prosperity, it will prepare them to understand and accept the principles of capitalism and democracy" –this implied that reading will save all humankind not just the elite. Francis Place as quoted by Vogel (2011) argued that "as a man's… desire for information increases, he becomes decent in his conduct and language, he becomes sober and discreet, while he rises; the uninformed man sinks". Others assert that it offers a means of reflection and appreciation that would form the foundation of a civil and altruistic society. Andrew Carnegie quoted by Vogel (2011) observed that in a public library "men could at least share cultural opportunities on a basis of equality…with access to books, character alone would determine ones destiny". This implies that libraries have an important role in ensuring that all sections of society are brought into the democratic process since it offers equality of access to information-an important ingredient in the democratic decision making process. Ian (2011) states categorically that:

Librarians are powerful instruments of social and political change, they can help in the demands of democracy and the spread of literacy.

Kargbo (1999) quoted in Ian (2011) asserted that institutions which support and give life to democratic process must exist. He rightly observed that such institutions include Public Libraries which offer access to information to all people in a myriad of formats. It is this ideological foundation of equal access to all that ensures literacy, education and development,Wani, (2008).

"Information is power" its flow from citizens to government and vice-versa is essential to responsible citizenship, responsive and accountable governance. Informed citizens are better equipped to utilize opportunities, access services, exercise their rights and hold state and non state actors accountable. Information on rules and rights concerning basic services (citizen education), financial services, private sector performance are important areas for effective citizenship participation in democracy (World Bank: 2002: xix). In the democratic process, libraries keep the citizens informed about the actions of representatives, provides tools for reskilling them in times of recession, consequently, increasing their chances of getting employed. It makes it possible for everyone to access information which enables him to participate fully in the democratic process. By informing the society, the citizens attitude will change- they will appreciate the practical issues of government, patriotism (corporate interest of the Nation), protection of public properties, tenets of democracy (the electoral process, politics and leadership) rights of the citizens and by this, an endearing democratic Nigeria will emerge and be sustained (Ainabor, 2004:173). This is expedient in a society where the poor cannot all afford to buy books let alone Internet and libraries are not within the reach of every citizen because they are mostly sited in major cities and towns. Hence Ebiwolate (2010) emphasized the need to take library services to the rural areas where 80% of the populace live since this is the only means whereby government can provide free education and social services to the people.

Library which is an important factor in establishing democratic societies is engendered by public library's provision of reading materials, organization of reading promotion campaigns for adults and children. Story telling hours, use of films and videos are ways of sustaining reading and information literacy skills required for lifelong education by the citizenry (Jemo, 2008). These programmes help improve the reading culture of the citizens, creating a crop of people who are willing to partake in democratic process, empowered to overcome poverty, informed of their rights, poised to partake in decision making and able to learn new skills to enhance their livelihoods (Mchomba ,2006). In this respect public librarians will help the public learn how to identify and evaluate information develop critical thinking skills essential for lifelong learning of both paper based and digital sources to support democratic citizen action (Kranich, 2001).

Public libraries ensure information and intellectual freedom. It provides information from all points of view, free access in accordance with the article 19 of the UN Charter on Human Rights "everyone has a right to freedom of opinion and expression… to seek and impact information through any media regardless of frontiers" (UN, 1948) as quoted by Jemo (2008). This intellectual freedom is the basis of a democratic system while other social/utility, public institutions like the media can be prejudiced or suppressed, the public libraries remain the only gateways to information that cannot be corrupted, slanted, untrue or affect other people's right. Unlimited access to information facilitates economic, social and political rejuvenation that eliminates social injustices which pose a threat to democracy. This is expedient in the developing countries where statistics from the World Bank indicate that 47% of the population in Sub-saharan Africa still live between $1.25 a day (Alawiwe, 2012).

Public libraries have been used as community centres which catalysed the democratic process. Indegaard (2005), Jemo, Melrille and Rayard (2008) as quoted in Agbodike (1992) present reports of the public

library being used as instrument for cultural, social and political revolution of the various countries such as Norway, Kenya and Soviet Union. The libraries are used to raise the political understanding of the people on current political problems, government policies and programmes, citizen education. The report by Agbodike (1992) indicated that in Soviet Union it was used as one of the most important instruments for raising the cultural level and professional skill of the population which aroused their craving for knowledge, thirst for books and a taste for reading. It offered individuals and groups a meeting place, a public space for community activities where through talk and video shows the citizens were brought face to face with topical issues affecting their health, environment, society, culture, rights while at the same time ensuring social cohesion and integration in an inclusive environment. This exemplifies the symbiotic relationship existing between the public library and democracy –informing citizens which Roosevelt (cited in Ian 2009) articulated as "the great symbols of freedom of the mind… essential to the functioning of a democratic society."

Laudable as the public libraries are to the survival of democracy globally the literature is replete with so many problems hindering the success of its roles. Vogel (2011), Kathleen (2001), Ian (2011), Jemo (2008) and Agbodike (1992) have highlighted cut in library budgets (funding), unaggressive government policies, lack of basic infrastructure (resources/Internet), inadequate library activities and services geared towards promoting democracy, attitudinal factors (poor reading culture/ ignorance) and inadequate training of librarians as some of the problems hindering the success of these ideals.

Research Questions
(1)   What do concepts "democracy" and "Public Library" imply?
(2)   What is the role of public library in sustaining democracy in Nigeria?
(3)   What are the strategies –services and activities, resources, information content,manpower and facilities put in place to enable public libraries help sustain democracy?
(4)   What are the problems hindering the public library from serving as a vital element in sustaining democracy in Nigeria?
(5)   What solutions could ameliorate these abnormalities?

Objectives of Study
1.   To investigate comprehension of the concepts "democracy" and "public" libraries.
2.   To ascertain the role of public library in sustaining democracy in Nigeria.
3.   To assess the strategies –services/activities, resources, information content, manpower and facilities put in place to enable public libraries help sustain democracy.
4.   To identify the problems militating against the realization of these goals.
5.   To identify the solution to remedy these abnormalities.

Methodology
Data for the study were collected using questionnaires, participant observation and unstructured oral interview. One State central library, it's three divisional libraries and 4 branch/community libraries in Anambra State were randomly selected as the sample from the eleven libraries which constitute the population. The questionnaires were administered to the staff of the public libraries while the unstructured oral interview was directed to the users. The questionnaires were divided into two sections, viz section A and section B. Section A (Biodata) was designed to elicit the following information from the respondents: rank, highest educational qualification, name of the library, section or unit of the library and years of librarianship practice. Section B was designed to obtain information on the research questions. Of the sixty (60) questionnaires produced, the researchers were able to distribute thirty-two (32) copies while twenty-seven (27) were completed and returned. This is a return rate of 84%. The data collected were analized using frequences and percentages.The list of the libraries studied is provided below:

	Names of library	Acronym
1	Divisional library Abagana	DLA_1
2	Community library Adazi-Nnukwu	CLA_2
3	Community library Ajalli	CLA_3
4	State central library Ifite-Dunu	SCL1
5	Community library Nkpologwu	CLN_1
6	Divisional library Nnewi	DLN_2
7	Divisional library Onitsha	DLO_1
8	Community library Ozubulu	CLO_2

Findings and Discussion
Demographic Information of the Respondents
The demographic information of the respondents in the aspect of academic qualification indicated, ranged between West African school certificate (WASC) and a Masters degree in various fields. It is striking to note that only two (7.4%) out of the twenty-seven respondents are librarians with MLS degree. This is in line with the findings of Osuigwe, etal (2012) in a related study which state that the number of professional staff in each of the State public library in the South East is very small and they lack the competencies required for the job.

Resrach Question 1: What do the concepts "democracy" and "Public Library" imply?

Table 1
Distribution of responses to implication of the concepts "democracy" and "public libraries"
Options

S/N	Democracy	DLA	CLA$_2$	CLA$_3$	SCL	CLN	DLN	DLO	CLO	TOTAL
1	People's rule	0	11	7.4	18.5	7.4	11	7.4	0	62.7
2	Liberalizing the political space	0	0	0	3.7	3.7	3.7	11	0	22.1
3	Institutionalizing the voting rights	0	7.4	0	7.4	7.4	11	11	0	44.2
4	Accountability to citizenry	0	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	11	7.4	55.4
5	Respect for human life	0	11	0	7.4	7.4	7.4	11	0	44.2
6	Citizens freedom and welfare	0	7.4	0	11	7.4	11	14.8	0	51.6
7	Equity, social justice, fundamental human rights.	3.7	3.7	0	22..2	7.4	11	18.5	0	66.5

S/N	Public Libraries	DLA	CLA$_2$	CLA$_3$	SCL	CLN	DLN	DLO	CLO	TOTAL
1	A library which may be freely used by anyone	3.7	11	7.4	29.6	7.4	11	18.5	7.4	88.6
2	Information resources on all subjects	0	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	11	11	0	51.6
3	Provides for the varied reading needs of users	0	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	3.7	11	0	44.3
4	Every user have access to help and information services	0	11	7.4	7.4	7.4	7.4	11	0	51.6

From table one (1) above, it is evident that 66.5% of the respondents understood democracy to mean observance of equity, social justice and fundamental human rights, while only 22.1% viewed democracy to mean liberalizing the political space which corroborates the ideas of Mbah (2007) and Onyishi (2007) who pointed the tyrannical attitude of governments in Nigeria. It is striking to note that the librarians from DLC and CLO$_2$ ticking from their response do not understand the ramifications of the meaning of democracy which is a serious shortcoming that will impact negatively on their job performance in this respect.

Moreover, 88.6% of the respondents view the public library as one which may be freely used by anyone. It is discouraging to note that some of the librarians (DLA and CLO$_2$) are not aware of the other attributes of the public library they serve and this applies to a large percentage of the respondents.

Research Question Il

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN SUSTAINING DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA?

Table II

Awareness of the role of public libraries in sustaining democracy

		DLA	CLA$_2$	CLA$_3$	SCL	CLN	DLN	DLO	CLO	TOTAL
	Yes	**3.7**	**11**	**0**	**29.6**	**7.4**	**11**	**18.5**	**7.4**	**88.6**
	No	**0**	**0**	**7.4**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**7.4**
S/N	**Publications**									
1	Provides equal access to information for participation in democratic process for electorate	0	7.4	0	18.5	7.4	11	11	0	55.3
2	Powerful instruments of social and political change by ensuring spread of literacy	0	7.4	7.4	11	7.4	7.4	11	7.4	59
3	Provides information resources for capacity building, reskilling and employment during economic recession.	0	0	3.7	7.4	7.4	0	11	0	29.5
4	Keeps citizens informed about actions of their representatives	0	0	3.7	11	7.4	7.4	11	0	40.5
5	Provides free access to a myriad of information sources which makes for a liberal and knowledgeable mind required for democracy	0	4.8	3.7	18.5	7.4	11	11	0	66.4
6	Provides conducive atmosphere for enlightenment through reading which ensures free, innovative and productive society	0	3.7	3.7	14.8	7.4	7.4	18.5	0	55.5
7	Provides information resources in various formats which are collected knowledge and history of civilizations from which democracy evolved	3.7	3.7	3.7	14.8	7.4	7.4	7.4	0	48.1
8	Serve as education and community centres information hubs and hangouts	0	0	7.4	7.4	7.4	11	11	0	44.2
9	Provides adequate facilities for leisure which engenders communal life.	0	3.7	3.7	14.8	7.4	0	11	0	40.6
10	Provides information resources in a dozen different languages to cater for the myriad of public library users	0	0	0	14.8	7.4	3.7	7.4	0	33.3
11	Gives access to materials which allows users keep in touch with their culture	0	0	7.4	14.8	7.4	7.4	11	0	48
12	Ensures intellectual freedom by providing access to all kinds of information	0	0	7.4	14.8	7.4	7.4	11	0	48
13	Serves as repository for the entire state	0	0	3.7	11	3.7	3.7	7.4	0	29.5
14	Serves as a civic pride through provision of citizenship education	0	0	7.4	11	7.4	7.4	7.4	0	40.6

As shown in table II above, 88.6% of the respondents agreed that public libraries can through their services and resources help in sustaining our evolving democracy while 7.4% who the researchers assumed that they responded no out of ignorance. 66.4% of the respondents indicated the provision of "free access" to its resources for the community's development of knowledge and liberal mind required for democracy, while another percentage of 55.3% acquiesced to its provision of equal access which is in consonance with the pivotal role of public library in accordance with the existing literature in this area. All the other options mentioned and agreed with by the respondents are in tandem with the roles of public libraries in a democratic dispensation.

Research Question III: What are the Strategies- Services/Activities, Resources,Information content of resources, Manpower and Facilities put in place to sustain democracy in Nigeria?

Table III

Strategies put in Place to Sustain Democracy by the responding public libraries

S/N	Services/Activities	DLA	CLA$_2$	CLA$_3$	SCL	CLN	DLN	DLO	CLO	TOTAL
1	Reference service	0	11	0	14.8	7.4	11	8.5	0	62.7
2	Story telling hours	0	0	0	3.7	0	0	18.5	0	22.2
3	Information literacy service	0	0	3.7	11	7.4	11	7.4	0	40.5
4	Discussion groups/talk shows	0	0	0	0	0	7.4	11	0	18.4
5	Circulation/lending service	0	0	7.4	14.8	7.4	7.4	18.5	0	82.5
6	Reading promotion campaign/ competition	0	0	0	29.6	3.7	0	18.5	0	51.8
7	Mobile library service	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
8	Library book/week	3.7	0	0	3.7	0	0	11	0	18.4
9	Cultural service	0	0	0	0	0	0	3.7	0	3.7
10	Recreational services	0	0	7.4	0	0	0	11	0	18.4
11	Branch libraries	0	3.7	0	11	3.7	11	18.5	0	48
12	Public library-community centre/ Public enlightenment centre	3.7	0	0	7.4	0	11	22.2	0	44.3
13.	Staging exhibitions	0	0	0	7.4	0	0	0	0	7.4
14	Extension services	0	0	0	7.4	0	3.7	14.8	0	26
Resources										
15	Books on all subjects	3.7	11	7.4	29.6	7.4	7.4	18.5	3.7	88.7
16	Magazines	3.7	11	7.4	11	7.4	11	18.5	3.7	73.7
17	Newspapers	3.7	11	7.4	11	7.4	11	18.5	3.7	73.7
18	Computers	0	0	0	3.7	0	0	0	0	3.7
19	DVDs	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	Videos/CDs	0	0	0	3.7	0	0	0	0	3.7
21	Pictures	0	11	0	7.4	7.4	0	11	0	36.8
22	Government documents	0	11	0	7.4	3.7	11	14.8	0	48
23	Pamphlets	0	11	0	7.4	7.4	3.7	14.8	0	44.3
24	Selected documentary films on relevant subjects	0	0	0	7.4	0	0	18.5	0	26
25	Drawings	0	0	0	3.7	3.7	0	11	0	18.4
26	Models	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	11
27	Charts	0	0	0	3.7	3.7	0	11	0	18.4
28	Lectures in the vernacular	0	0	0	7.4	0	0	3.7	0	11.1
29	Posters	0	0	0	11	0	0	3.7	0	14.7
30	Audio visual	0	0	0	7.4	0	0	0	0	7.4
31	Cassette tape of government programmes, achievements and problems	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Information content of resources										
32	User survival information on health, housing, income, Agriculture and education	0	7.4	7.4	11	3.7	3.7	14.8	0	48
33	Citizen education/civic education	3.7	0	0	11	7.4	11	14.8	0	48
34	Intellectual freedom	0	3.7	0	22.2	7.4	3.7	14.8	0	56
Manpower: (skills and attributes)										
35	Special training for unorthodox library services	0	0	0	3.7	0	0	3.7	0	7.4
36	Approachability	0	11	0	7.4	7.4	14.8	14.8	0	55.4
37	Personal friendliness	0	7.4	0	11	7.4	0	11	0	39
38	Ability to communicate	3.7	11	7.4	14.8	7.4	7.4	14.8	0	66.5
39	Neat and personal appearance	0	11	7.4	11	7.4	7.4	11	3.7	58.9
40	Knowledge of information resources	3.7	11	7.4	14.8	7.4	7.4	14.8	0	66.5
41	Creative and innovative ability	3.7	3.7	7.4	11	7.4	11	16.5	3.7	66.4
42	ICT skills	0	0	0	7.4	0	3.7	3.7	0	14.8
43	Literacy skills	0	0	0	7.4	7.4	3.7	11	0	29.5
44	Reading skills/culture	0	3.7	0	18.5	7.4	3.7	18.5	0	51.8
Facilities										
45	Multifaceted community hub	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
46	Wireless Internet access	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
47	Auditorium	0	0	0	0	0	0	18.5	0	18.5
48	Meeting rooms	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
49	Sitting lounges	0	3.7	0	0	0	0	18.5	0	18.5

As shown in table 3 above, four strategic factors bordering on services/activities, resources, information content of resources, manpower (skills and attributes) and facilities of the public libraries were

investigated to determine how they were repositioned towards sustaining democracy. Of these five factors only a few were applied to these state public libraries.

SERVICES / ACTIVITIES:

Reference services and circulation/ lending services representing 62.7% and 82.5% respectively were offered by all. Children's story telling hour which is a salient service for "catching them young" in the areas of information literacy, reading skill/habit development and stimulation of the imagination and creativity of the child was practiced only at the SCL and DLO. This supports the emphasis on oral tradition (UNESCO/ IFLA, 2004) as cited by Osuchukwu (2010) in this information society and knowledge driven economy of the 21st century. Moreover, a study of the contents of the children's story hour indicated that citizenship education and survival information were not part of the programme which is a very significant shortcoming contradicting the situation in developed economy as reported by Kerslake and Kinnel (1998) stating that "A fundamental justification of UK public libraries across their 150 year existence is their connection to the concept of citizenship". Reading Promotion Campaign and Competition, Cultural service and recreational services were prevalent in the DLO. They have had the 'Spelling Bee' a radio programme involving reading for which prizes were given to children. They also involve the children in dance drama with musical instruments which will help the children in the area of indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity. Suffice it to state that in this present dispensation and the public libraries' emphasis on "inclusiveness" these other libraries have performed abysmally poor because by excluding the children and other users they have encourage exclusiveness which is not healthy development for democracy and is against the provisions of the WSIS Geneva 2003-Tunis 2005 (cited in Omekwu: 2006).

44.3% of the respondents indicated that their libraries served as public enlightenment/community centre contrary to the researchers observation and responses from oral interviews from library users which indicated that apart from students who come to the library to read during examinations, the library does not in any way involve the community members. This assertion is buttressed by the lack of facilities such as multifaceted community hub, meeting rooms and sitting lounges in the libraries. It is striking to note that it is only the DLO that has an auditorium which is used for extramural lessons and for meetings by the community for a fee while no effort is made to use such sessions for interaction through talks and group shows in the form of radio messages or discussions with the members of the community. Traders and external users were hardly seen around the library-contradicting Omekwu's (2006) clarion call for the repositioning of the nation's public libraries as agencies for the development of the mind, enlightenment of the people and cultural preservation. Only SCL, DLN and DLO offered extension services which was limited to the supply of books to some secondary schools. Ideally it is through extension services that public libraries reach out to the remote library users and offer wide range of advisory roles on agriculture, health, citizenship education and education. Achieving this goal would require Audio visual resources, posters, lectures in vernacular, charts, selected documentary films which are non existent in most of the libraries surveyed (Ref. Table III). This scenario to a large extent according to Kerslake and Kennel (1998:160) makes caricature of communities information needs which Usherwood (1997) quoted in Kerslake and Kinnel (1998) argues that it is access to information that increases the citizens ability to be informed on the questions of the day… as such it is an aid to democracy. It is only through these services that lifelong learning, continued access to information, preservation of our cultural heritage and effective participation in democratic processes can be achieved.

RESOURCES

All the libraries investigated had books on all subjects, magazines and newspapers which are required for information dissemination ranging between 300-5000 volumes for the various libraries (Osuchukwu, 2011). Suffice it to say that from observation and oral interview responses from users, the researchers discovered that a lot of these books were obsolete, dust infested and unused collections. At SCL the researchers found good children's books that were kept and unused. Most of the journals on display racks were unbounded. However, at DLO there were indexes to the contents of newspapers which increased the use of their information content.

It is however, very sad to note that it was only 3.7% of respondents from SCL who indicated the availability of a computer. On observation it was discovered that this computer was domiciled in the Director's office for administrative use. None of the state public   libraries under review operated an automated system corroborating Omekwu's (2000) agitation- How many Nigerian public libraries have Net Access?...archives, libraries, museum, educational institutions are not connected to ICT platforms.

The engine which drives the information and knowledge society is ICT and its essence is to enable citizens have access to information that could empower them. If access to information is a yardstick for judging democratic growth and our public libraries are unable to guarantee this because the oil that greases the engine ICT is absolutely unavailable. Our democracy is under serious threat because a country which cannot guarantee access of information to its citizens through the public library which is "free" cannot boast of social inclusion which is characteristic of a democratic dispensation. Murdock and Golding (cited in Kerslake and Kinnel 1998)

corroborate this finding in their assertion that universal access to information and communication facilities are necessary if individuals are to participate in both political and social processes.

Audiovisual resources, DVDs or CDs and cassette tapes, posters, charts, Radio and selected documentary films which could enhance information dissemination to the rural population who are predominantly unable to read and write, were conspicuously absent in most of the libraries. The political tempo did not even force these public libraries to create awareness and inform the public through posters about elections, voting process and rights. From the researchers observation, the public libraries are predominantly used as reading rooms for students preparing for examinations.

MANPOWER (Skills and attributes) 66.5% and 65.5% of the respondents indicated that ability to communicate and knowledge of information resources were skills required for the public librarian to function effectively. Another 66.4% indicated creative and innovative ability. This indication conforms to the INSINC analysis (1997) as quoted in Kerslake and Kinnel (1998) on community resource centres which averred that, in some cases all that is lacking is a grasp of the nature of partnership in the community of the need to move away from traditional service models. Public librarians in rural areas dealt with mostly illiterates and adults and should be innovative. It is worthy of note to point out that only 14.8% of the respondents SCL, DLN and DLO indicated that ICT skills are required for public librarians to help sustain democracy.

This position is at variance with the assertion made by Omekwu (2006) who emphasized that, old skills may not be adequate to address new and emerging technologies of the information society… especially for the expanding roles of public libraries as institutions geared to the development of the mind, literacy and cultural repositories in developing countries. A meager 29.5% indicated that they required to have information literacy skills but in this era of information society this skill is very important to enable the librarian know how to find and sieve from the myriad of information sources and formats available and render efficient information service to the various groups of public library users-the vulnerable, the illiterates, the youths, the professionals, and every member of the society for sensitizing them and introducing them into the mainstream of democracy. Most of the staff did not have basic training in Library and Information Science-"they are Lawyers manning hospitals in place of doctors." The staffing is inadequate. They are not re-engineered for the job and this is affecting the services adversely.

Facilities

All the libraries except DLO do not have any facilities that could attract members of the community to the library which could serve as a platform for involving the members of the community in library programmes that could impact on their lives. The DLO auditorium and lounges are used by students for extramural lessons and reading. It is also used for Christmas party for the children during which citizenship programmes are not also introduced. The community also use this venue for meetings for a fee. At DLO there is a bungalow built by the state government but it is empty without any facilities such as computers though it was branded a Microsoft building for the public library. Most of these state public libraries are situated in old unkept and dilapidated structures not befitting of a library for reading. The little available spaces are cramped with broken chairs and tables and they lack adequate ventilation. They are all rented buildings except DLO which was originally conceived as a library.

Research question Iv

What are the problems bedevilling public libraries in their bid to sustain democracy?
59.2% and 59.1% of the respondents indicated poor funding and poor government polices for libraries and education as the major problems hindering the public libraries in serving its purposes. The aftermath of these problems are evident in the dilapidated structures, the staffing (where non librarians without the requisite training mann the libraries), the resources obsolete and unkept and basic infrastructure like computers are lacking. Libraries do not generate funds and has been reported by Osuigwe et al (2010) and Vogel (2005) they do not attract the attention of the government like other social facilities such as roads, fire fighters, police etc. So when the need to cut services arises libraries are easy target. Other problems included attitudinal problems (apathy of users) 33.3%; shortage of qualified and trained staff 44.3%; lack of social infrastructure in rural areas 37% which discourages librarians from staying in the rural areas; decline in reading culture 48.1% (emphasis is on viewing on Net, on televisions), lack of training/awareness of library staff of the importance of public libraries in sustaining democracy 40.7% (a library attendant asked if the public library has anything to do with democracy?); inadequate library services and activities   required for the re-orientation of the populace 40.5%

Research Question V
What are the suggestions for ameliorating these conditions?
The findings revealed that 51.7% of the respondents pointed to seeking philanthropic outlets for improving

resources, services and facilities. In developed economies the Carnegies, the Ford foundations and others played significant roles in the development of libraries and this is already infiltrating into our own system. However, cultivation and sensitization of the users and librarians need to be improved in this respect. This is where marketing, branding, advocacy and public relations skills have to be put to use in order to fully explore this avenue. 51.6% also adopted the idea that government policies have to be repositioned to be aggressive and proactive, for it is only an informed citizenry that can participate in democracy. They have to stop the lip service paid to ICT and information literacy.On this note, 44.4% advised that government should review its policy on funding of public libraries recognizing it as the major information institution that is critical as a bridge between society and its development and growth in all its ramifications. 44.3% of the respondents requested librarians to become proactive-they should lobby and strategize. 36.9% suggested the integration of citizenship education in the curriculum of librarians as the easiest way to equip them with the required theoretical and practical preparedness for this all important assignment for they are the only information gatekeepers that cannot be "bought over". 33.2% indicated that citizenship education should also be covered in the children's story hour programme. However, the lowest respondents 22% subscribed to reviewing this free service orientation of public libraries highlighting the apathy of most librarians to this development which contradicts the dictates of this era and is in tardem with Adimorah,s call (1983) for a change of this stand a long time ago.

Recommendation
The investigation revealed that all the state public libraries studied have the potentials to serve as instruments for sustaining our evolving democracy but they have not been repositioned and re-engineered for this purpose as a result of inadequacies in their activities/services, resources, manpower and facilities.
    Therefore we recommend that:
(1)   Public libraries must begin to market their services, re-organise their services and activities to impact on the communities in which they are located especially offering grassroots services for the predominantly illiterate and semi- illiterate population. Nwegbu (2009) posited that marketing library services, especially value added services helps to achieve a high level of customer satisfaction and maintaining library relevance.
(2)   Public libraries must connect to ICT platforms. If they do, social media and Internet facilities (twitters, facebook) can be used to increase "access" to information and consequently connect politics to technology, which can be used to mount pressure and influence government policies. Online personal talks could be explored to sensitize and change peoples attitude to politics that had been informed by corruption, high-handedness, intimidation and recklessness.
(3)   Libraries should provide citizenship education to its constituencies, inform the electorates on what they should know about democracy-rights and privileges, the role of government through posters, pictures, government documents and audiovisual resources. They should impact on the communities they serve.
(4)   There is need to reposition public library services, activities, facilities and staffing. Librarians should be employed, trained and remunerated adequately so that they are retained in the places where they work.

        In conclusion, it must be stated that the state public libraries in Anambra State have been relegated to the back door of the trailing edge. When this basic pillar of democracy, one of the few stations of government that is open to all, that helps us become better people and improve society is in jeopardy our State politicians are too concerned with re-election to lend a hand-they ignore the fact that many important, even essential things cannot be measured in money (Naira). If our public libraries are revamped and revived in the model of the famous New York Public Library they will serve as a catalyst and dynamic force for a complete cultural and political revolution.The future looks bright with the foundation stone laying of a metropolitan public library which prototype include the required ICT features and provisons that will enable it function adequately as an instrument for sustaining democracy in the state.

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