EXHIBITION AND ORAL PUBLICITY AS A PREDICTOR OF UTILIZATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN ABIA AND IMO STATES

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ABSTRACT: *The general purpose of the study is to determine how exhibitions and oral publicity relate to utilization of information resources in university libraries in Abia and Imo States of Nigeria. The study covers the entire population of 394 library users.328 copies of the questionnaire were completed and returned for analysis representing 83.2%.The survey research design was used for the study. The survey research design was used for the study. Findings show that there is a significant relationship between library exhibitions and utilization of information resources in university libraries in Abia and Imo states ($\bar{x}^2$ cal = 244.2 ≥ $\bar{x}^2$ tab = 21.03), oral publicity and utilization of information resources ($\bar{x}^2$ cal = 115.7 ≥ $\bar{x}^2$ tab = 21.03). The study recommends that Library exhibitions must maintain a minimum standard to ensure that useful results and responses from users are obtained. University libraries should increase the number of potential patrons of their services by mounting exhibitions at regular intervals. Libraries should publicize their collections by linking oral publicity to their collections and services. Acquisition of major information resources and donations should be publicized orally to promote their use and to spur others to emulate the donors with their own donations.*

KEYWORDS: Exhibition, Oral Publicity, Information Resources, University Libraries Abia , Imo, State

INTRODUCTION

Public relations is a diverse set of means used by people all over the world to communicate ideas, ensure mutual understanding, facilitate goodwill and healthy relationship with one another in their

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undertakings. The term Public Relations (PR) is defined by the New Webster's English Dictionary (1992) as the promotion by a firm, corporation and government department, of the goodwill of other organizations or the public by distributing information about policy. It is also the degree of goodwill existing or created between organizations or between an organization and the public.

According to the British Council of Institute of Public Relations, as cited in Sengupta (2016) and Ezirim (2013), public relations is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organization and its public. Public relations practice in the view of World Public Relations Association is the art and social science of analyzing trends, predicting their consequences, counseling organization leaders and implementing planned programmes of action which will serve both the organizations and public interest (Osuji, 2014). Koga (2012) views public relations as an art or science of making conscious efforts to attract the goodwill and understanding of various publics to an organization and make these publics favourably disposed to the organization's services, products or view points. Wolte (2015) and Ajala (2016) state that public relations is a creator of favourable image, a builder of bridge of goodwill, a monitor of public opinion, a facilitator and a harmonizer of issues, crises and problems with a view to prescribing a simplified and workable formula for policy makers as a management tool or as to achieve the individual or organization's objectives. The Public Relations practitioner should, in addition to being socially responsible, work to win the publics favourability to the organization. In order to achieve this, the practitioner should strive to increase public awareness of his organization, correct wrong impressions, project the truth, establish corporate links and enhance employee morale.

The library is among the organizations that require a great deal of public relations to pursue its objectives. Aghadiuno (2013) remarks that public relations in the library may be seen as the planned effort to influence opinion and actions of its publics through socially responsible performance based on mutually satisfactory two-way communication. Opara (2011), quoting TLA Public Library Standards (2000), maintains that library public relations must be a co-ordinated and continuous effort to communicate a positive image of the library. A well-rounded public relations programme will promote the availability of the library's resources, services and programmes to the public. It not only tells the library's story to its publics, but also helps shape the library and the way it performs.

Nwezeh (2010) notes that there are many facets of librarianship which have a universal application and public relations are one of these. In whatever country one operates, in whatever type of library one serves, public relations is one aspect of librarianship in which everyone learns from each other. Good public relations are a prerequisite for the effective functioning of any library. The public services librarians in most libraries are the image makers, and indeed, the gateway through which people establish contact with the information rich environment of the library. Ezema (2008) and Alansari (2013) recognize that libraries have traditional method of promoting their services (public awareness services) that are in form of display, book fairs, shelving guide, and selective dissemination of information among others. In addition to this, the library often adopts some other strategies to promote public relations within the library. Rice (2014) adds that public relations is a tool which library managers, irrespective of the types of library (public, academic, special, school

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or the National library) must employ, especially in this era of too many needs competing for scarce funds. One of the fundamental roles of library public relations are to encourage users utilizes the resources of the library.

To utilize, in the library world, means to use. According to the Oxford Encyclopedic English Dictionary (1991), to utilize is to make practical use of something, or to use effectively. Uhegbu (2007) has observed that utilization is the actual putting into appropriate use of something. It is the process of making use of something available. To Uhegbu (2007:68) utilization is governed by several principles which are goal identification, availability and utilization (in which utilization is governed by "thing" provided and its accessibility). Availability is meaningless if it is not put to use.

In defining a university library, Sharma (2002) says, that the university is a major contributor to the growth of human resources, while a university library promote means of communication and advancement of knowledge. The university library is expected to contain research collection, a variety of subject books, a large and complex catalogue, reference staff, a large building and open self- device. Aguolu (1996) is of the view that the university library is the most important organ in the institution, and that the academic health, intellectual vitality and effectiveness of any university depend largely upon the state of the health and excellence of its library.

Aina (2004) and Nworie (2012) state that for a university library in this information age to effectively perform its myriad of functions, its information resources must also include audio visual materials, microforms, compact Disk-Read only Memory (CD-Rom), and necessary equipment such as microfiche and microfilm readers, computer and CD Rom drives. These are needed in order to use some of the items in the collection. The library must also have full access to the Internet. The university library collections are always large, running into millions of materials. In the light of the above background, this study therefore, seeks to investigate the relationship between exhibitions and oral publicity as a predictor of utilization of information resources by users in university libraries in Abia and Imo States of Nigeria.

Research Questions
This research was based on the following research questions:
(i)   Is there any relationship between exhibitions and utilization of information resources by users in the university libraries in Abia and Imo States?
(ii)   Is there any relationship between oral publicity and utilization of information resources in the university libraries studied?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The operation of successful library services relies heavily on the effective application of public relations skills and the careful planning of public relations strategy. Egwim, Edom and Nnadozie (2015) reaffirm that the objectives of library public relations are to protect the image of the library with the aim of attracting and sustaining wider patronage and to educate library patrons on the functions and services of the different libraries. It helps to identify information needs of library

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patrons and find ways of solving them and strives to create good, credible and qualitative reputation for the library as an information providing institution. It also helps to guide the management of different libraries on the formulation of policies that will benefit the library clients in general. According to Ezeani (2004:80):

The work of public services librarians has gone beyond answering questions or finding physical copies of materials through the use of catalogues, stacks and shelves to a stage where their communicative value has to improve. The library has to communicate its services to the outside world in order to breach the information divide. The library needs to connect to patrons with ideas and information and support lifelong learning. Therefore, public relations in this context deals with the several ways the public services librarian can use in promoting the library as a whole, through developing an identity and image and communicating library goals and missions to the community. Exhibition is one of the ways the university libraries use to communicate to their public on some of the services they render. Exhibition is defined as public display of works of arts or items of interest held in art gallery, museum, library or trade fair (Adomi, 2008). According to Edom, Nwosu and Akanwa (2015), exhibition in the library can also be organized to celebrate the number of years the library has existed, the number of awards the library has won, the elevation of the staff particularly the management staff to higher levels of authority in government, Independence Day of the country, anniversary of the state, etc. Ogunrombi (2016) upholds that generally, library exhibitions are mounted to;

(i)   create awareness of information sources and services in the library;
(ii)   to create a positive attitude towards the library as an important asset of the
      university in the pursuance of its objectives;
(iii)   to create demand for and use of the information
       resources or services exhibited;
(iv)   to communicate to the community the institution's
efforts, including its achievements and to enhance the status of library personnel.

To Nwalo (2003) and Aina (2004), exhibition and displays are essentially to advertise the services and resources of a library. A display draws the attention of library users to the services rendered by the library. It publicizes the services through illustrative materials on display stands, display boards, etc. Exhibition, on the other hand, is generally to stimulate readers' interest on a particular area of interest to the community. A good example of exhibition is a library providing books, periodicals, films, video tapes, tape slides, etc. on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). These materials could be exhibited through the use of glass display, cabinet display stands, display boards, etc. Exhibitions and displays are often topical, focusing on a particular topic. They could also be mounted to motivate library users to explore some library resources. Displays and exhibitions on a particular topic do not normally exceed two months. Ideally, libraries should mount them on a regular basis.

Olanlokun and Zaid (212) see exhibition as what is displayed or held forth for the public, a display of works of arts, skills, pictures, books and other materials. Libraries usually hold exhibitions to display new materials stocked by the library. These may be books, journals or new technological materials to inform the patrons about their existence in the library. Libraries hold exhibitions to

mark important events and bring to the attention of their patrons important documents, pictures and other materials associated with that particular event. Libraries also hold exhibitions to call attention to important issues of the moment. The library can call the community's attention to it through exhibition of literature on it. For example exhibition can be mounted for the HIV/AIDS pandemic, Ebola virus disease in Africa, 2014 World Cup football competition in Brazil, 2015 General Elections in Nigeria, and so on. .

 Bamijoko, Oguntayo and Idada (2011) maintain that during the occasion of library exhibitions, prices of books are reduced to enhance visitors' patronage. Both the students, members of staff and even the library will have the opportunity of buying books at cheaper price. At the time of exhibition, a library usually makes available a notebook for people to make comments. These comments are supposed to be on ones impressions of the exhibition. Whatever comments made will help the library assess the success of the exercise and improve on the future exhibitions. Olanlokun and Zaid (2012) reason strongly that for exhibition or display to be effectively executed in the library there should be a policy to guide the exercise. The library can receive materials on education, politics, religion, culture and others. It is in the interest of the library to accept materials that fit into its policy and are produced in accordance with minimum standards for such display. Materials that can constitute a breach of the peace should be avoided. Information on those who provide materials for display must be made available. When violent or abusive language is used, the material must not be used. This is a clear indication that library exhibitions must maintain a minimum standard to ensure that useful results and responses from library patrons are obtained.

Oral publicity is another major public relations strategy in the university libraries. Harrison (2014) maintains that oral library publicity deals with the importance of the spoken word as an instrument of library publicity, and it will refer to talks, lectures, discussions, debates and seminars presented both formally and informally to groups of people, both adults and young people. He states that personal oral publicity is the informal approach of telling laymen about the scope, aims, contents and services of libraries through the librarian's private conversation with his friends and acquaintances. It seems to be an occupational characteristics of librarians the world over that they live their jobs throughout   their whole existence. Many good and effective public relations have been done and can be done by librarians taking the opportunity to tell layman in their private conversations something of the contents and services of their libraries, and to give them a brief inkling of the almost limitless informational and bibliographical work undertaken by their staffs. Opara (2006) maintains that library talk to community groups is a good oral publicity for library public relations and described it as community relations. The library's planned public relations programme must include reaching out to various groups in the library's community like professional groups, school pupils, the different arms of government, intervention agencies, etc. This is often done in places outside the library. The talk focuses on the library and the services it provides. During such talks, management could draw the attention of the audience to special part of the library collection or a specific service which may be of particular interest to the audience. The thrust of the talks is to package the library in such a way that it could win the sympathy and support of the different groups.

The services of the liaison-librarian are a big boost to oral publicity in the university libraries. Smith (1990) and Onwubiko and Onu (2012) opine that the appointment and services of a liaison-librarian popularizes library activities and services in the eyes of the people. This involves getting library staff members to visit the community served and talking to the people about the services and resources that are available within the library. The liaison-librarian whose duty implies that of a public relations officer will create necessary awareness to the communities visited and assist them in information gathering and information-problem-solving. He is therefore the librarian field worker, the interlinking force between the library, its resources and services, and the outside community.

Babafemi (2002), Aina (2004) and Yankova and Miltenoff (2004) agree that the library provides user education in order to equip a user with enough knowledge on the use of the library. This will enable the user to use the library resources effectively and efficiently. Information is expanding at a fast rate resulting in information explosion, and new resources are being introduced into the library. Through user education, the user is able to get any information he/she desires as well as developing the skills to use the resources of the library independently. The various methods of imparting the skill on the user of a library include one-to-one sessions, library orientation/tours and classroom instruction.

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study using questionnaire an instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was titled Library Public Relations and Utilization of Information Resources in University Libraries Questionnaire (LPRUIRULQ). The population of the study is 394 registered users of the libraries in Abia and Imo States. This instrument was administered on the 394 registered library users of the four public universities in Abia and Imo States. No sample size was drawn from the population. This is because the population of the study is small and accessible. The census method was used to ensure that opinions of all the registered users were captured for the study.

Analysis
A total of three hundred and ninety four (394) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to users in the four university libraries in Abia and Imo States. Out of these, three hundred and twenty eight (328) copies representing 83.2% were duly completed and returned for analysis.

Research Question 1
Is there any relationship between exhibitions and utilization of information resources   in university libraries in Abia and Imo States?

Table 1: Mean values of the relationship between exhibitions and utilization of information resources in university libraries in Abia and Imo States

S/N	Library Exhibitions	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Result
A	It reveals to me library information resources and services	110	85	75	58	2.8	Significant
B	Inspires me to demand for information resources exhibited	137	96	68	27	3.0	Significant
C	It motivates me to explore library resources	157	107	43	21	3.2	Significant
D	It reduces my zeal to use library resources	55	33	145	95	2.1	Not Significant
E	It explains importance of library to me	85	99	73	71	2.6	Not Significant
	Significant mean value					**2.7**	

Based on the significant mean value of 2.7 as shown on Table 1, library exhibition which includes book fair, glass display, shop-window display and cabinet display stand reveals to users to know the information resources and services available in the Library ($\bar{x} = 2.8$); inspires the users to demand for the information resources and services ($\bar{x} = 3.0$), and above all, motivates them to explore library resources available as exhibited by the libraries ($\bar{x} = 3.2$). However, exhibition as revealed by Table 4.3 does not make the users to make use of the library resources as some of them stated that it reduced their zeal to use the library resources and did not explain to them the importance of the library. Both of these had mean values less than the significant mean value of 2.7.

Research Question 2

Is there any relationship between oral publicity and utilization of Information resources in university libraries in Abia and Imo States?

Table 2: Mean values of the relationship between oral publicity and utilization of information resources in university libraries of Abia and Imo States

S/N	Oral Publicity	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Result
A	It helps me to listen to library staff on their library's objectives	147	108	42	31	3.1	Significant
B	It convinces me to come to the library and make use of the services	110	96	72	50	2.8	Not Significant
C	Enables me develop skills on use of library	158	87	62	21	3.2	Significant
D	It makes it hard for me to know use of library	80	73	97	78	2.5	Not Significant
E	It opens my eyes to the relevance of libraries	147	96	55	30	3.1	Significant
	Significant mean value					**2.9**	

Table 2 reveals that oral publicity such as lectures, media talks, debates and seminars are means of encouraging utilization of information resources by users in the university libraries as they relate to users in three main areas where the mean values are up to the significant mean value of 2.9. The relationship is because oral publicity helps users to listen to library staff on their library's objectives ($\bar{x} = 3.1$); enables the users to develop skills on the use of the library ($\bar{x} = 3.2$) and opens users eyes to the relevance of the library ($\bar{x} = 3.1$). On the contrary, oral publicity does not convince users to support the library and makes it hard for the users to appreciate the use of the library. These two have mean values less than the significant mean value of 2.9.

FINDINGS

Analysis from Table 1 shows that there is a relationship between exhibitions and utilization of information resources by users. This is because library exhibitions such as book display, revealed to users library resources and services, inspired users to demand for information resources exhibited, motivated users to explore library resources and also explained to users the importance of the library. The findings are in agreement with the revelations of the researches by Nwalo (2003) that exhibitions and displays are essentially to advertise the services and resources of a library. The result is also in agreement with Ogunrombi's (2016) finding that library exhibitions are mounted to create awareness of information resources in the library; to create demand for and use of the information resources and services exhibited and to create a positive attitude towards the library as an important asset of the university in the pursuance of its objectives. The significance of this finding therefore is that when libraries engage in exhibitions, they give users the opportunity to make decisions on what resources they may need whenever they visit the library and the capacity to be good users of the library.

Findings as shown on Table 2, reveals that there is a significant relationship between oral publicity and utilization of information resources by users in university libraries in Abia and Imo States. Thus oral publicity such as library orientation, use of library lectures, talks, debates and seminars helped users to listen to library staff on their library's objective; convinced users to support library services, enabled users to develop skills on the use of the library and open their eyes to relevance of libraries. The findings are in agreement with the outcome of the research by Olanlokun and Zaid ()2015 who maintains that oral publicity is the informal approach of telling laymen about the scope, aims, contents, resources and services of libraries through the librarian's private conversation with his friends and acquaintances. The findings also agree with Babafemi (2016) that library provides oral publicity in order to equip a user with enough knowledge on the use of library and this will enable the user to use the library resources effectively and efficiently.

Recommendations
(i) Library exhibitions must maintain a minimum standard to ensure that useful results and responses from users are obtained. University libraries should increase the number of potential patrons of their services by mounting exhibitions at regular intervals.
(ii) Libraries should publicize their collections by linking oral publicity to their collections and services. Acquisition of major information resources and donations should be publicized orally to promote their use and to spur others to emulate the donors with their own donations.

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