

PUBLIC LIBRARIES, RELIABLE SOURCES FOR PUBLIC KNOWLEDGE

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Abstract

In this knowledge age, people need to broaden their horizons. The fountain of wisdom flows through books. The seeds of knowledge must be cultivated in public. Public libraries play an important role in the overall development. Moreover, they are social institutions that serve as cultural, educational and social hubs for communities. Acting like communities' partners, public libraries or people's universities might best support the development of users in their communities. The literature *search* method is used in this research paper. Having awareness of Global Trend in the library field, modern public libraries need to provide a means of self-education which is endless. In reality, libraries can drive the process across the entire world. In order to serve as a remarkable source for public library, librarians and the users, this research work is done.

Keywords – Public Libraries, Communities Partners

Introduction

In this modern era, information can be considered as one of the basic needs of mankind. For developing countries in the world their top priority problems is information poverty. The simple solution to this problem is to facilitate the citizen for information access easily and freely. Realizing the importance of information, public libraries have been established to disseminate information to a wide range of users community with free of charge.¹

This study attempts to explore various community information needs and to search for all the possible opportunities providing community information services (CIS) through public libraries in Myanmar.

Public Libraries or People's Universities are mainly targeted on community development that means a process where communities members come together to take collective action and generate solution to common problems. In addition, community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with the skill they need to effect change within their communities.²

Approaches for communities' development are recognized internationally. In 1949, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) formulated definition of a public library which was accepted widely. Later, it was revised in 1972. The Manifesto is prepared in cooperation with the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). In 1994, this Manifesto proclaimed UNESCO's belief in the public library as a living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of mankind.³

In accordance with UNESCO manifesto, a public library is stated as follows:

- (a) Public library is financed for the most part of public funds.
- (b) Without charging fees from users, it is open for the public's full use.

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¹ Anaba Alemna A, "Community Libraries: An Alternative to Public Libraries in Asia." *Library Review*, vol.20 (7) (1995). accessed February 11, 2019. <https://www.emeraldinsight.com>.

² Hage, C., *The Public Library Start Up Guide* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2004), 52. (Hereafter cited as Hage, 2004)

³ Hage, 2004. 50-52.

- (c) Intending as an auxiliary educational institution, it provides self-education.
- (d) Educative and informative materials are housed for giving reliable information freely.¹

Scope of the Study

This research paper provides some of the elements of the ideas and actions that have been taken to try in Myanmar public libraries. In line with UNESCO Manifesto, the authorities of the public libraries make effort to support and engage in the development of public libraries.

Method of the Study

The main aim of the study is to make investigation on the co-operative activities of the public libraries in Myanmar. Most of the librarians of public libraries in Yangon have a lot of experiences in co-operation with the communities. Some of them have participated in the project and established linking with schools. To have the complete data and facts, the literature search method is used.

Objectives of the Study

1. To give a summary on the development of public libraries and review key studies on public librarianship in Myanmar.
2. To study the detail assessment of the public library system.
3. To be aware of the users' right to assess libraries services and facilities.
4. To upgrade the accessibilities of public libraries and to notify the librarians about defined services areas.
5. To provide individuals and groups with resources and services in variety of media to meet their need.
6. To give a wide range of knowledge, ideas and opinions for the users to maintain a democratic society.
7. To consider the usages of public libraries for the development of youth.

Outcome of the Study

Public library provides all kinds of information and knowledge readily available to its users. On the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, religion, nationality and social circumstances, public library attempts to meet the needs of all groups in the community.

Public library facilitates to improve education career development and health outcomes. Moreover, it has a responsibility to meet the needs of children and young people. Public libraries exist for others to use, both now and future. Thus, the maintenance of public libraries is crucial for new generation.

¹ IFLA, "The Section of Public Libraries: the IFLA /UNESCO Public Library Manifesto." accessed February 15, 2019. <https://www.ifla.org/vii/s8/unesco/manif.htm>.

Literature Review

A literature review is an evaluative report of information found in the literature related to the selected area of study. The review surveys scholarly articles, books and other sources relevant to particular issue, area of research, or theory, providing a description, summary and critical evaluation of each work. The purpose is to offer an overview of significant literature published on a topic. A long number of studies have been undertaken on many aspect related to live and work of prominent writer. The literature analyzed and reviewed has been appended below in a classified manner as supportive materials for further references.

Alemnna examined the public library service in Africa with special reference to public services. Moreover, he suggests the provision of community information outside the library system which will not provide materials mainly in local languages but also be suited to the levels of the people in the community.¹

Myat Thuzar studied on the development of three community libraries in Mandalay District, for the period from the time of setting to 2014. This study covers Brahmaso Library, Shwe U Daun Library and Nann Taw Shae Nel Lonn Sai Yar Library. Based on their communities, location, condition, capabilities and constraints occurred in maintaining the development, the paper will emphasize how effectively support user's needs. This study finds out the potential solution to attain the development of the community libraries.²

Lamani, Talawar and Kumbar examined the role of rural libraries in the development of community. This study focuses on importance of rural libraries services as a community information center. The analysis of the study indicates that, rural libraries facing various problems to uplift the community such as independent library building, non-professional staff, financial problem, etc.³

Lamanal, Talawar and Kumbar examined the present status of district central library, Dharward district in the state of Karnataka, India and it has been made to re-focusing the role of public library as community information centre to contribute towards community development by fulfilling the requirement of community.⁴

The purpose of the study of Mostert and Vermeulen purpose of the study was to identify the characteristics and possible weakness of public libraries, specifically in South Africa; to study trends with regard to community libraries and to establish norms for community libraries; to conduct a survey of the community libraries in the Borough of Pinetown, and to test the validity of these libraries against the norms established.⁵

¹ A. Anba Alemna. "Community Libraries: An Alternative to Public Libraries in Africa", *Library Review*, vol.44 (7) (1955), accessed May 20, 2019, <https://www.emeraldinsight.com>.

² Myat Thuzar, "An Analytical Study on the Development of Community Libraries in Mandalay." master's thesis, Yadanabon University, 2015.

³ Mercy Echem. Patlence Ebiseman Llulu-Pokubo and Eberechi Ejuh, "Role of Rural Libraries in the Development of Community: A Review of Literature" *International Journal of Librarianship and Administration*, vol.5 (3) 227-235 (2014), accessed February 15, 2019. <https://www.ripublication.com>.

⁴ M. B. Lamanla, A. B Talawar and B. D Kumbar, "Rejuvenate the Public Library as Community Information Centre: A Case Study of District Central Library, Dharwad", *International Journal of Information Dissemination and Technology*, vol. 4 (2) (2014), accessed February 15, 2019. <https://www.ljtdt.com>.

⁵ B. J. Mostert and W. M. Vermeulen. "Community Libraries: the Concept and its Application by the Plnetown Public Library," *South Africa Journal of Libraries and Information Science*, vol. 66 (1) (1998), accessed February 5, 2019. <https://www.sajlisjournals.com>.

Public Libraries, Reliable Sources for Public Knowledge

Libraries are the local centres of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to the users. Different types of libraries have been explained by different experts depending upon the importance they give to their objectives. According to the mode of services rendered to the readers, libraries are broadly divided into four types. They are categorized into the National Library, the University and School Libraries and Special Library and Public Library.¹

Definition of Public Library

The public library is an educational institution open to all rich or poor, young or old. It is an institution which has no age limit, no entrance requirements other than the desire to learn. The public library is often called the people's university.²

It is an agency for the collection, preservation, use and transmission of recorded information and knowledge. The materials, services personnel and physical facilities of public library cover the interest of all ages and groups in the population.³

The UNESCO public library manifesto. 1994 proclaims UNESCO's belief the public library as living force for education, culture and information, and as an essential agent for the fostering the peace and understanding between people and between nations.⁴

Objectives of Public Library

- (1) To support access to all resources free from all libraries
- (2) To meet the potential needs of the community
- (3) To provide facilities and materials for research
- (4) To create a library and socially integrated service of ideas of information in society
- (5) To aid formal education
- (6) To develop self and adult education
- (7) To promote reading habit
- (8) To support the civic cultural and spiritual actives of individuals, groups and organizations.⁵

Function of Public Library

- (1) To act as agency of informal, adult education
- (2) To be an agency of perpetual self-education
- (3) To develop co-operative, cultural experience and democratize living
- (4) To promote materials presenting all parts of concerning currents and critical crises

¹ Dr. Raghunan Pandey, M.N. Veayudhan Pilla, *Library Planning and Development*. (New Delhi, Jnanada Prakashen: 2011) 301-308.

² IFLA/UNESCO Public Library, "The Mission and Purposes of the Public Library: FLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, 1994," accessed June 18 2019, <https://www.degruyter.com.lfla/unesco> (Hear after cited as IFLA/UNESCO)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Hage, 2004.

⁵ IFLA/UNESCO

- (5) To act as a community centre
- (6) To be a centre for social useful and cultural activities and discussion of current topics arranged
- (7) To be a meeting place of Government with public area
- (8) To display of books or list of generalizes and specialties
- (9) To reflect all the present and potential views of community
- (10) To act as a centre of research
- (11) To be a centre to support formal education ie- college, school and university.
- (12) To promote popular enlightenment
- (13) To be a center of developing centre and spiritual aspects
- (14) To encourage all kinds of people all age of people for all purposes and use of library information
- (15) Organization of cultural exhibition, lecture group discussion, symposium of occasional interest, art program etc.¹

The Purposes of Public Library

Providing resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of individual and groups is the main purpose of the public library. They have the primary role in the development and maintenance of a democratic society.²

Information Centre

The public library, the local centre of information, has a key role in collecting, organizing, exploiting information, as well as providing access to a wide range of information sources.

Information technology gives considerable power to those able to access and use. The internet promises improvements to internal communication in and among developing countries. It continues to provide an important access put to online information services.³

(i) Library Building and its Opening Hours

Library building plays an important role in providing effective library services. So, the library building should be designed to supply adequate and efficient accommodations for materials, readers and staff. It should provide for the convenient use of library materials by users and for the work of library personal involved in acquiring and preparing books for use in making them easily available for users.⁴ In scattered rural areas, public library can be used as an important learning and social centre and meeting place. Thus, librarians should make the use of the buildings and the facilities for the benefit of the whole community.

¹ IFLA/UNESCO

² IFLA/UNESCO

³ P. Brhui, *The Library in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Facet Publishing, 2007), 4-18.(Hear after cited as Brhui, 2007)

⁴ Brhui, 2007.

Public library opens the whole week during the limited time. The opening hours of the library should be convenient and comfortable for the people who live in the surrounding areas. It is closes on gazette holidays.¹

(ii) Library Staff

The number of the staff of the library needs to be adequate. Thus, to meet the best need of library users, more efficient staff should be appointed. Librarians of the public library should be accepted degrees at least B.A or Post Graduate Diploma in Library and Information Studies.²

For having expert knowledge, they can serve dutifully for the development of the library. If there are ethnic group living in the local area wish to handle the post they can be appointed. People from all levels who are regular users of the library are attracted by the staff.³

(iii) Resources

To gain satisfaction, public library must have adequate resources, especially the collection of books and materials that need to conserve for longer use. The library should carefully preserve and conserve damaged books for long existence. In addition, it should provide up-dated materials, newly published and replacement materials in order to meet the needs of the local community. Amazing information technologies are available now and they can support to enter new society.⁴

(iv) Partnership

To become a successful public library, partnership is an important arrangement. A partnership is a form business when two or more people share ownership. They also take responsibility for managing the company. All partners are actively involved in the business's operation and income is paid to partner.⁵

Co-operation is vital for the partners to advance their mutual interest. The inclusive partner may be individual, business, schools and government.

(v) Mobile Library

Mobile library is one of the public libraries services. The public based Community Centres perform the work of finding books that readers want to read. They conduct reading circles and literature reviews to spread the practice of reading. Moreover, it conducts mobile libraries works to lend books, journals and magazines to rural readers on a weekly and monthly basis.⁶

It is "Reading" that is essential to develop skills, expand knowledge and stir the immigration. However it is not always possible to set up and run permanent libraries in several locations. Especially, the story time in primary, middle and high schools' library are useful for mobile team to start its work. Once in two week books can be changed and during summer

¹ Brhui, 2007 45.

² Latimer K., and Niegaard H., *IFLA Library Building Guidelines: Developments Reflections* (Munche: K. G. Saur, 2004). 30-35.

³ D. E. Davinson, *Communiity Library: Statistics and Survey* (New York: Community Library Research, 1999), 66.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ D. E. Davinson, *Communiity Library: Statistics and Survey* (New York: Community Library Research, 1999), 66.

⁶ Brhui, 2007.

holidays it opens in school playground. Besides changing the books, the activities such as reading, colouring and drawing competition for young learners are organized.¹

(vi) Services for Aged People

In case of the aged people or disabled people who enjoy using the library materials, the staff should response dutifully to fulfill their wishes. In providing the library services, the staffs need to use effective and convenient ways that are different from their daily routine.²

(vii) Educational Charity

The core activities of the public library are to support formal and informal education. Thus, energy provides access to knowledge in printed and other formats media and internet sources. The completion of formal education is not the end of learning. People from complex society need to acquire new skills at various stages of their life.³

To assist the process the public library should provide materials in the appropriate media. In addition, it should help the customers to make use of these learning resources effectively.⁴

There are a variety of ways in which public library can support both formal and informal education. This achievement will depend on the local context and the level of available resources.⁵

(viii) Cultural development

The public libraries main focus of attention is to provide cultural and artistic development in the community and to shape and support the cultural identity of the community. The ways to achieve success are working in partnership with appropriate organization, providing space for cultural activities and organizing cultural programme. To ensure that cultural interests are represented in the library's materials is also important. Material for spoken language and reading in the local community should be provided. Staffs who speak the languages of the community served should be employed.⁶

(ix) The Social Role

The public library is particularly important in communities where there are few places for people to meet. It is useful as a meeting place or the drawing room of the community. The library is used for research, education and leisure interests. It provides positive social experiences and brings people into informal contact. To support community interests, library facilities should be designed and built to foster social and cultural activities.⁷

¹ Dr. Panneerselvam, "Public Libraries as a Community Information Centers: A Futuristic Approach" accessed 14 June 2019. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/311774470public-libraries-as-community-information-centre>.

² Ibid.

³ "Finedon Educational Charity", accessed 14 February <https://www.finedoneducationalcharity.org>.

⁴ Margaret Kendall, "Public library services for older adults" *Library Review*, vol. 45 no. 1. 1-29, (Hereafter cited as Margaret)

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Arthur W. Hafner, "Democracy and the Public Library: Essays on Fundamental Issues", *Contributions in Librarianship and Information Science*, Number 78.

⁷ IFLA/UNESCO

(x) An Agency for Change

Public library is the positive agency for change in the community. To support education it provides a wide range of materials. To bring economic and social benefits to individual and the community, it makes information accessible to all. It makes contributions to the maintenance of a well-informed democratic society. It also helps to empower people in the development of their lives. Awareness of the issues involved discussion within the community is important for the library.¹

(xi) Access for All

According to the fundamental principle of the public library, its services must be available to all and not directed to one group in the community. The provisions of services are equally available to minority groups who are unable to use the mainstreams services, for example linguistic minorities, physical and mentally disabled people and those living in remote communities.²

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) should be used to allow access to the library's collection.

(xii) Local Needs

Public libraries are locally based services for the benefit of the local community. Community information services should also be provided. Local needs should be assessed regularly. Without this discipline, the library will get out of touch with those who are in need of help. Therefore, librarians should be aware of the changes in society arising from different factors.³

(xiii) Local Culture

The public library is regarded as a key agency in the local community for the collection, preservation and promotion of local culture in all its diversity.

A variety of way, for example the maintenance of local history collection, storytelling should be used to achieve success.

By using the important method of communications, the public library should encourage its continuous development.⁴

(xiv) Freedom of Information

All ranges of human experience and opinion, free from the risk of censorship should be represented. Librarians and governing bodies should uphold basic human rights and resist pressure from individual and group.⁵

¹ Margaret, 16-29.

² Ibid.

³ Nicole Whitehead, "The Effects of Increased Access to Books on Student Reading Using the Public Library", *Academic journal article Reading Improvement*, Fall 2004.

⁴ David Carr, *Open Conversations: Public Learning in Libraries and Museums* (California: Libraries Unlimited, 2011), iii, 78-90.

⁵ Hage, 2004.

Recreation Centre

(i) Story Time

Being developed, public libraries use story telling as a way to pass down folklore and history in order to keep young peoples' attention. It is a fantastic way to make information or data meaningful. Digital media has aided story telling by making it more accessibility to larger organization.¹

(ii) Garden Club

The local community garden club maintains the garden and the space in the building is used for storage. The amount of fund efforts them to be regular partners with a large group of citizens in the community.²

The central role of Myanmar's libraries in rural communities throughout the country suggest that they have the potential to be a significant catalyst for community development. Currently the only public support provided to these libraries is through the Ministry of Information and Information and Public Relation Department. For the high standing of libraries in community life, operations on voluntary staffing and donations are extremely important.³

The total numbers of libraries that exist in Myanmar is shown in the following table.

¹ Hage, 2004.

² Hage, 2004, 33.

³ The Asia Foundation, *Myanmar Library Survey: a Comprehensive of the Country's Public Libraries and Information Needs*. (Yangon: The Asia Foundation, 2004), 1-12.

Library Allocation by Township in Myanmar

Sr	State/Region	Township	Active 5B's Libraries
1	Ayeyarwaddy	Hinthada	21
		Maubin	21
2	Bago	Htantabin	38
		Bago	27
3	Chin	Falam	14
		Mondat	9
4	Hpa-An	Hinthada	10
		Kawkareik	9
5	Kayah	Loikaw	13
		Demoso	6
6	Magway	Myaing	92
		Gangaw	51
7	Mandalay	Pyin Oo Lwin	55
		Thabeikkyin	53
8	Mon	Chaungzon	10
		Thanbyuzayat	9
9	Naypyitaw	Pyinmana	66
		Lewe	16
10	Sagaing	Pale	80
		Shwebo	58
11	Shan	Lahio	22
		Kyaukme	21
12	Tanintharyi	Myeik	25
		Thayetchaung	21
13	Yangon	Taikkyi	39
		Kawhmu	27
Total		26	812

Conclusion

The public library, the local gate way to knowledge, provides a basic condition for life-long learning, independent decision and cultural development of the individuals and social groups. To establish a nation with multiple developments, human resources developments in various aspects are essential. Literacy is the key to education and knowledge and thus, public libraries are the best use of available resources. As a matter of fact, the public library enables the users to prove their worth. Some of the services are not provided by other types of libraries but public libraries are providing at present.

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