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Assessment of the impact of mobile libraries on traditional libraries

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Abstract

Mobile library is a form of librarianship where library staff move information to the doorstep of users through the use of technology both software and hardware. Mobile libraries very crucial library type that has come to save the under privileged, to educated the less informed on issues such as HIV, AIDS, disease out breaks, nutrition, career guidance etc.

The scarcity of static libraries everywhere every time has made the essence of mobile libraries within communities, countries, regions and districts.

Mobile librarianship is not only limited to the use of vehicles and vans to transport books to readers far and wide, it also encompasses the use of telecommunication, proxy servers, online repository etc., to transmit digital information to users far and wide.

Mobile libraries will also increase the patronage of traditional libraries ones the user gets use to it and generates interest in libraries.

Mobile libraries complement the work of the traditional libraries. It is able to reduce the pressure on the traditional libraries thus providing extra support to the traditional static libraries. Through mobile libraries, traditional libraries are able to increase members and their services as well anywhere and at any time.

The physical part of a mobile library is made up of a big van or bus carrying books and other learning materials that meet the needs of users that will be patronizing the library.

The effect of mobile libraries on the traditional ones could be both negative or positive yet ht e positive effects far outweigh the negative ones. The congenial space and atmosphere, couples with expert attention and guidance comes with the use of traditional library which is a huge disadvantage to the mobile libraries since a user of a mobile library may not afford the space and quiet environment that a static traditional library may bring.

It should be noted that, the presence of more mobile libraries will assist the less privilege to have access to the moving vehicle or physical libraries and the highly privilege to take advantage of mobile internet libraries.

Keywords: libraries within communities, countries, regions and districts

1. Introduction

1.1 Background study

The ability for library resource to reach it needed patrons within a desired covered distance could be termed mobile library. Mobile library could be on the phone (mobile library site) or on a vehicle which moves o the location of its users, on animals such as camels and donkeys, on trains, ships or any other convenience of movement. Mobile libraries could also be located at selected joints where patrons pass by regularly a such as bus stops, pedestrians' way, coffee shops etc. kindles, tablets, palmtops and laptops can be gadget that can carry mobile library sites for accessibility anywhere.

Mobile librarianship has a very long history. From the 15th century in developed countries and even during the days of Alexandria.

During those times when schools and educational facilities were not common, mobile libraries were employed to carry schooling and education to students and user of information. This made the access to information and education a little convenient for deprived locations. In Ghana, mobile libraries have been employed by some telecommunication companies such as Tigo, Vodafone as part of their corporate social responsibilities. They adopt a vehicle preferably a van, stock it with books, CDs, DVDs, other educational materials, internet access, laptops, tablets, smart phones, palm tops etc. that will enhance the need for education and move over to areas such as rural ones that need information foe education but do not have access.

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1.2 Statement of Problem

In Ghana children and teachers in some communities have to cross the river before they go to school, some use canoes and ferries, other go to school on bicycles and on foot walking for hours on ending. Other communities have school under trees. Other rural communities fortunate to have schools have the school structure in a very bad state. Mobile libraries are essential because resources are too scarce to build permanent stationary libraries for limited use. High information sharing connotes high academic performance according to UNESCO.

It is estimated that the literate population in Ghana stands at a staggering 10% and this has been attributed to the lack of infrastructure and facilities to meet the needs of the students and teachers alike. For education and information to be popularized and convenient and accessible to a wider coverage, mobile libraries should play a major role in the library industry.

Mobile phones have become so popular in Africa, north America, Europe, and other parts of the globe since 2017. The time has come for libraries to maximize the benefits of this technology by using it as a platform for the transmission of library information to users, patrons, staff and students alike. The use of mobile library sites can also go a long way to complement the work of the traditional libraries.

1.3 Objectives

This project deems at analyzing some of the benefit and setbacks mobile libraries have had on the traditional libraries. It additionally researches into the viability of mobile libraries in developing countries and developed ones. How mobile libraries changed the entire role libraries play in our society is also part of the reason for this study. Though the role of the traditional library has not changed very much it has become very crucial to look at how it can meet societies ever changing lifestyle through mobility.

1.4 Scope

This project is mainly for all traditional library institutions that does not practice mobile librarianship. It also encompasses all mobile libraries from m-libraries to smart mobile library sites to mobile buses. This study also looks at the benefits that the use of mobile smart phones as libraries will be to user of the traditional library. Also all forms of mobile librarianship are part of this study. Additionally, this study involves any form of effect that a traditional library can get from adding mobile library to its services.

1.5 Limitations

The challenges I encountered during the research are:

- Though mobile libraries are very important and common it is not popular in developing countries where resources are difficult to come by.
- The cost involved in setting up a mobile library especially those that use physical moving devices are quite expensive.
- Since mobile libraries are not common in sub-Saharan Africa especially in Ghana it difficult to notice and list all the impact that it has on the traditional libraries.
- The sustenance of mobile libraries is also difficult because of high maintenance cost of vehicles and maintaining mobile web sites.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

There have been numerous articles on the subject of mobile libraries. Some focus on mobile libraries limiting their project to online libraries on mobile phones and other mobile device such as kindles, tablets etc. others also look at mobile libraries from the angle of moving libraries resources to the location of users and patrons.

The former writes about the use of mobile phones to send text messages to both staff of libraries and its users of crucial information concerning the library such as new arrival of books, location of certain volumes, audio orientation of the library, reminding of borrowers of overdue books, etc. it additionally writes of how mobile sites and mobile catalogues are being implemented by libraries to facilitate the location of library resources at any time from any location.

2.3 Critique of the existing literature relevant to the study

Mobile technology has been very instrumental in the execution of mobile libraries. Mobile libraries have also equipped their moving devices with telecommunication devices and advertised themselves to the general public such that with just a dial one can easily invite them into his or her premises. The financial nature of mobile libraries is such that it is mostly government funded projects since its sustainability will have to be relied on funds, donations, the tax payer's money etc.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This research took me through a lot of articles, literature and publications online. It also made me watch a lot of videos on YouTube online to achieve some level of understanding into the mobile library system.

3.2 Facebook Discussions

Participants of Facebook discussions proved that mobile libraries are getting into extension in the sense because of the presence of google, kindles (computer novels) other search engines and high technology devices. These technologies give users access to electronic books and database, e-journals etc. Without links and web pages' users are able to get instant access to library information through SMS/Texting.

3.3 Accessibility

The presence of technology has made it possible for buses, vans and other large vehicles get access to toilet facilities and other lavatories to make library users comfortable when they are in the vehicle.

Shrinking budgets and rising cost has also made mobile libraries become less essential over fixed ones. Funders do not understand the true value of mobile libraries. Therefore, it has become very difficult to find donors to support mobile libraries.

Cost

For some library users, the cost of travelling from their various destinations to the location of the library is quite unbearable for them, therefore they will prefer to wait for the mobile library van which has a calendar that provides

services to a particular group of people within a catchment area for a period.

There also comes into question the recurring cost of operating a mobile library, the license/tax, the fuel and base costs as per branch etc.

The cost of the Vehicle being used for the services, the cost of building various garages where the vehicle will park during each visit at each base of service.

The Cost of travel is also a very important factor in the overall cost of the running the mobile library. A mobile library that covers more than forty kilometers will spend more on fuel and other travelling incursions compared to a moving library that travels for a few minutes.

Proximity

There are some library users who do not live anywhere close to a library. The distance from where they live to the closest library could be more than fifty kilometers, therefore they can only wait and rely on a mobile library for their services. Frequency of stops of mobile libraries within their designated areas of services. The time that is spent on a single visit also contributes greatly to the success of their services and the users' satisfaction. Time taken for patrons to travel to libraries could be saved with the existence of mobile libraries.

Convenience

Mobile libraries need to schedule their visiting hours to need the expectations and needs of their users and patrons as well. The depth of service offered to members should meet their information demands in order to keep them patronizing their services. Since mobile libraries move to the door step of their patrons, they meet the exact needs of them. As a result, their services and products gets older quickly with time. Stock replenishment of books and other materials are regular for attraction.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

4.1 Results

The results of this study shows that mobile libraries induce more users who have lack for mobile phones, the internet and other technology to access information.

Even though not everybody has the need for mobile libraries because of the presence of mobile phones and other high-tech gadgets, not everybody also has possession of this technology, therefore, mobile libraries will always be of essence to the public.

Mobile library services are found to much costly than the static services or the traditional library services. This is due to the cost of fuel, maintenance and other cost in running the mobile vehicles. There are other hidden charges associated with running the mobile library. This could be the cost of hiring drivers, mobile library specialist, etc.

4.2 Recommendations

It is very crucial that policies and plans are put in place to make mobile libraries prolific to make up for the deficiencies that the traditional libraries have created since fixed libraries are more than mobile libraries.

Mobile libraries should be made to serve exactly like the traditional libraries so that its advantage of mobility will be of essence to users.

Librarians of mobile libraries should not only rely on the government and policy makers for funding of the library.

They should also look for private and donor agencies to support and sustain the mobile library.

The Proliferation of hyper-connected mobile devices, networked sensors in appliances and infrastructure, 3D printing and language-translation technologies should be employed by mobile librarians to support their services and other works in order to make them more efficient effective.

The habit of maintenance culture on the vehicles used for mobile libraries should be taken serious as this is what makes the library mobile and what it is.

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