



E-ISSN: 2707-6644

P-ISSN: 2707-6636

IJCPDM 2020; 1(2): 47-50

Received: 24-04-2020

Accepted: 25-06-2020

**Mark Quaye Affum**

Borsah Library Complex, Cape  
Coast Technical University,  
Cape Coast, Ghana

## The expectations of the community from public libraries

**Mark Quaye Affum**

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.33545/27076636.2020.v1.i2a.62>

### Abstract

Public libraries are a very place for the learning community. It serves as space where the public can achieve quietness to study, discuss and learn. The public therefore expects a lot from them.

Public libraries are basically designed to suit the needs of the public. It comes in different shapes and sizes with content or volumes for children, adults, students, business, and the handicapped such as the lame, blind, deaf etc.

Public libraries have space for different activities from the public. They have space for breakfast meetings, business meetings, storytelling for children, meeting rooms, etc. there are also books of various types such as fiction, engineering, information technology, business, reference books, self-help books, children's books, books for the blind, etc.

Public libraries can be very huge with more than eight floors with different sections such as reprographic unit, serials department, book processing department, the digital resource center, the electronic library, the circulation, baggage room, the librarian and deputy librarians lounge, the reference library, business library, fiction section, science and technology library, journals, magazines library, the printing section, the publication unit, the classification and cataloguing section, the special libraries office etc.

It is very challenging yet rewarding for libraries to equip its facility with most materials that will attract the attention of both new and old users.

**Keywords:** Expectations, public libraries, children, adults, students, business

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Background study

The public library is the local center of information; they are big structures with general volumes that make all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to its users.

The services of the public library are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status.

The public library for years has been very useful to the public. In recent times attention to the public libraries, the intrusion of information technology or the digital age has made the public calling for a lot of added services from the public library.

Basically the public libraries are patronized for learning purposes. It is also a hub of people to read the newspapers.

"The library is seen as essential to the individual as well as the community by all groups surveyed."- EIFL Study on Perceptions of Public Libraries

The provision of lavatories and other essential amenities for the public convenience also comes to play as far as the public expectations of the library is concerned.

The recent changes in society such as cost of education, office space, new start up, increment in the number of schools, has urged the public to demand more from public libraries. This has made the libraries do more to meet the needs of the growing population within a given community and their demands.

Books will remain the number one reason why people patronize the public library. Apart from this reason, there should be other services that libraries can use to attract both user and non-users alike. Virtual libraries are the order of the day. Where libraries are able to merge with other online libraries to provide electronic books for people who for some reason such as distance, disability, shyness etc. may not be able to borrow books of a particular subject or title. A lot of questions linger on the minds of library management as to how they make the library meet the expectations of the public. Regularly, librarians meet to brainstorm on how to find solutions to their basic challenges on attracting and maintaining new members.

**Corresponding Author:**

**Mark Quaye Affum**

Borsah Library Complex, Cape  
Coast Technical University,  
Cape Coast, Ghana

It is a question that will forever remain since user's appetite and behaviour towards information change with hanging times.

### 1.2 Statement of Problem

The public library is by many is seen as a haven for most people. Students and people who could not afford tuition or schooling, students who cannot have access to books due to its cost, scarcity etc. come to the public library for solutions to such problems.

In some instances, the distance from a patron's house to his/her place of learning is quit far as a result, they resort to the public library that is if it is closer.

Patrons also get away from noisy environment to the library to achieve concentration when learning. Free accesses to the internet facility also compel users to patronize the public library.

It has been reported that the public library is filled with old books which deter the public from using the place. There are some people who psychologically do not deem it convenient to study in their various homes, hostels, offices, etc. it is for this reason that they troop to the library to study.

### 1.3 Objectives

Making the library more convenient for the public to benefit fully from it is one of the basic aims of this study. It is also to create awareness for the entire public to know the existence of the public library, to participate fully and to make it useful.

There are a lot of citizens who are not aware of the true essence of the library. They do not know all the services and benefits that a public library can offer.

On the other hand, other users of the public library feel the need for added services such as the introduction of internet facilities, coffee shops, and books from other disciplines, etc. others can include such as planning events programmes, improving the presentation of the lending stock, and managing public spaces in the library.

Libraries are changing with time as far as their role in society is concerned this is why there is the need for public libraries to move in the right direction to achieve what is expected of them from the public.

### 1.4 Scope

This project is mainly for all public libraries that need to be upgraded to meet the general expectations of the public. Everyone has the need to use the library. It is for this reason that there is no clear cut scope as far as users of the public library is concerned.

This study also explores all resources that a library need that actually meets the expectations of the public.

### 1.5 Limitations

The challenges I will encounter during the research are: Lack of access to relevant literature and information has been one of the major setbacks for this research. Funding has also been very limited as far as this study is concerned. The researcher was unable to access entire coverage of the public, since there are both literates and illiterates within the public sector.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

A number of people have conducted research on public

libraries and their responsibilities. One of such study is "What do the public want from libraries? A practitioner guide". This guide is produced as a result of a shared intelligence of some selected library practitioners. it particularly looks at choice of books and stock as key. Expanding the offer that the public library give to it users. – Targeting genuine customer needs and adding new services to boost customer satisfaction. It also shares light on the essence of more communication by the public library to the public. Also it looks at the Public library as a trusted and well-loved brand - but poor marketing means awareness of the offer is low.

Another article "The Public Library 2010: and it's role with the Internet by John Lake,

Chairperson of the Public Libraries Section of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) for the Seminaris de l'Aula Jordi Rubio I Balaguer, Facultat de Biblioteconomia I Documentacion Barcelona 24 October 2007 focus on the public library and information services and their users.

### 2.3 Critique of the existing literature relevant to the study

Public libraries are not really about users and non-users - people dip in and out. Focus on motivations not barriers. Public spaces in the library must be utilized and valued. Children and teens are important for libraries today and in the future.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

For this experiment, I used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. I also consulted some selected librarians, the public and users of the public library including students. I also read through a lot of literature to give me insight into the selected research topic. also there was distributed questionnaire to librarians, the public, students and other users of the library to simulate their view as far as their expectations of the library was concerned.

### 3.2 Performance metrics

Those public users who had their expectations met were about 5% the rest of the 90% thought the library has more to do to satisfy the public.

### 3.3 Description of the Stimulator

Information gathered from users of the library suggest that, any average user of the library who enters the library first think of what he is going to do in the library. a user also looks at what the public library can offer to him or her to prevent him or her from leaving the place in the next few hours he is going to spend there.

The digital Information seeker expects a high speed internet facility, a scanner, a digital camera, a high speed server and security for his search.

The information seeking behavior of the public library user shows that if it is inconvenient for the user to access information, the user gets bored easily and withdraws from the services of the library.

The social media has been very useful in engaging the public in the library because of its popularity and informal nature. If the library has part of its services hooked onto the social media, it encourages users experience and convenience as well. A lot of people who use the social

media for library purposes find very attractive.

The library staff face a lot of challenges as far as meeting their human resource needs and remunerating the existing ones are concerned. Their industry is almost entirely ignored and this goes a long way to limit the services they provide to the public.

Infrastructure is another problem of the library which has persisted as far as the history of the library is concerned.

### **Providing Internet Access through Public Libraries**

This is at the top of the priority list of the public when it comes to the usage of public libraries. The cost of internet accessibility especially in developing countries is quite overwhelming and because of these users always desire free internet access especially from libraries. Since public libraries are mainly funded through the central government it is sometimes possible to equip these libraries with free WIFI that will engage users who use mobile phones and laptops to study in the library.

### **Professional services**

Some users of public libraries are naive of the usage of the facility as a result such part of the public expect to meet skilled librarians who will be able to assist them in meeting their needs to make their visit to the facility fruitful.

### **Collaboration**

Sections of the public users of the library expect management to forge partnerships with them for business training, some months of activities etc. this is because this section of the public have programs that need the commitment of the library for a period of time.

### **Quality of Books**

A user of a public library will choose to either buy or borrow a book depending on the quality of stock available. Some users do not borrow books from the library because of the copyright or date of publications and the quality of information meeting their needs. Library users or patrons will keep coming for new books once the library is able to update the titles available.

### **Provision of Other Services**

Though the core services of the library may be book lending and borrowing the public may also need other services which the library may not be aware of. Services such as ICT suite, and hosts training courses, jobseeker advice schemes, language and cookery classes, community garden, and meeting room hire.

## **4. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **4.1 Results**

This work shows that, the public really expects a lot from the public library. The public also has very little knowledge of what the library does its essence and the benefits they can achieve from the usage of the public library.

A lot of people think the public library is used for reading and learning alone. They have no idea that it can be used to search for outdated audio, video, literature, etc.

the library with innovation and learning from the leaders in the industry can improve upon its services and do more to meet the growing demands of the public such as the blind, students, children, adults, the old and young, professionals, etc.

Meeting the expectations of the community comes with a lot of work and commitment and funding. The public library also needs all the necessary staff to function in the respective jurisdiction in order to perform to the public expectations. The public library must not only satisfy a small group of the public such as children or students, it must also look at all areas of the public needs.

policy makers, the government, philanthropist and other stakeholders who play a pivotal role as far as the function of the library is concerned must all come on board to create a congenial environment for the public library to function acceptably.

So you can see that, the public have a genuine deep affection for their libraries, even people who seldom patronize the place themselves. The expectation is that libraries should be centered on a good choice of books, reading and learning, and should be customer friendly in their people, quality public space, services and technology. Rapid changes in media and information (including Google and cheap books), and changing consumer preferences make these expectations even harder to meet. If libraries however fail to meet the public's expectations there is a real risk of users drifting away, and we would all be the worse off for that.

User and customer research is always full of unhelpful contradictions and ambiguities, and there is never a right answer about how to act in response.

It is a matter of judgment. It is not enough to slavishly do only what the public seem to ask for.

### **4.2 Recommendations**

It is important for public libraries to study their users very well to be able to get from them what they need from the library.

The public library should be mandated by the government and policy makers as the official hub for the national internet access and for national e-learning center and other national activities. In this case a lot of funds and budget funds will be allocated to the public libraries to enhance its services and activities.

Public libraries should be powering development by providing access to free online information to the increased demand for information in every field and part of the world. Public libraries should also be included in plans for ICT and broadband expansion.

There should be enough communication between library staff and the public concerning new arrivals, new facilities that have been brought into the library and other guidance or information that they need to make the place (library) comfortable for them.

Competence development in various public libraries is extended and intensified by authorities to achieve expected results.

Library staff should be able to approach students more often to listen to the challenges that they face when they use the library and be concerned enough to address them.

The library should create the culture of educating the public regularly about its products and services, its essence and also expand its services such as working 24 hours seven days. Apart from the library getting rid of old and obsolete volumes to archives and stocking it with new volumes, it should be able to make available good research materials for the purpose of the public consumption.

Finally, as far as a public library is concerned, it should be

able to have in stock books of all subject areas not forgetting books on politics, civic education.

Governments should include libraries in plans for ICT and broadband expansion, as well as digital inclusion policies.

Libraries should participate in local and national initiatives and discussions on internet policies, digital inclusion, broadband access and open data.

There should be suggestion boxes available for the community to put in their suggestions to make way for their needs to be met.

The library should be seen as a growing organism where inputs are made regularly be it services or products to satisfy the public.

## 5. References

1. Information & Libraries Scotland, [www.slainte.org.uk](http://www.slainte.org.uk)
2. Opening the Book Ltd. [www.openingthebook.com](http://www.openingthebook.com)
3. The Reading Agency. [www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk)
4. Museums Archives and Libraries Council. [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)
5. Opening the Book Ltd. [www.openingthebook.com](http://www.openingthebook.com)
6. CIPFA Social Research. [www.cipfasocialresearch.net](http://www.cipfasocialresearch.net)
7. National Endowment for Science Technology and the Arts, [www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk)
8. Museums Archives and Libraries Council, [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)
9. Society of College, National and University Libraries, [www.sconul.ac.uk](http://www.sconul.ac.uk)
10. The Library Journal, [www.libraryjournal.com](http://www.libraryjournal.com)
11. Audiences UK, [www.audiencesuk.org](http://www.audiencesuk.org)
12. TBI Communications, [www.tbicommunications.com](http://www.tbicommunications.com)
13. Sheffield University, [dis.shef.ac.uk](http://dis.shef.ac.uk), [www.techdis.ac.uk](http://www.techdis.ac.uk)
14. Coventry University, [wwwm.coventry.ac.uk](http://wwwm.coventry.ac.uk)
15. Opening the Book Ltd, [www.openingthebook.com](http://www.openingthebook.com)
16. The Literacy Trust, [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)
17. The Manbooker Prizes, [www.themanbookerprize.com](http://www.themanbookerprize.com)
18. Museums Libraries and Archives Council, [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)
19. Chatterbooks, [www.chatterbooks.org.uk](http://www.chatterbooks.org.uk)
20. Designing Libraries, [www.designinglibraries.org.uk](http://www.designinglibraries.org.uk)
21. Whole Building Design Guide, [www.wbdg.org](http://www.wbdg.org)
22. Museums Archives and Libraries Council, [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)
23. Reading Agency, [www.readingagency.org.uk](http://www.readingagency.org.uk)
24. Museums Libraries and Archives Council, [www.mla.gov.uk](http://www.mla.gov.uk)
25. Opening the Book Ltd, [www.openingthebook.com](http://www.openingthebook.com)
26. British Library, [www.bl.uk](http://www.bl.uk)
27. Reading Sight, [www.readingsight.org.uk](http://www.readingsight.org.uk)
28. Working Together, [www.librariesincommunities.ca](http://www.librariesincommunities.ca)
29. Quick Reads, [www.quickreads.org.uk](http://www.quickreads.org.uk)
30. Book Trust Children's Books, [www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk](http://www.booktrustchildrensbooks.org.uk)
31. London Borough of Camden, [www.camden.gov.uk](http://www.camden.gov.uk)
32. Liverpool City Council, [www.liverpool.gov.uk](http://www.liverpool.gov.uk)
33. Lancashire County Council, [www.lancashire.gov.uk](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk)
34. Booktime, [www.booktime.org.uk](http://www.booktime.org.uk)
35. Chatter books, [www.chatterbooks.org.uk](http://www.chatterbooks.org.uk).