Library and Information Services to Children: A Review*

N. P. Mahwasane and N. P. Mudzielwana

University of Venda, South Africa

ABSTRACT Considering the background to the provision of library services in the rural areas, it seems that these are poorly developed and that children in rural areas do not enjoy the same privileges as children from urban areas. In view of the lack of infrastructure in rural areas it is impossible to provide adequate library and information services to children and so the paper deals with the question, how can service provision be improved? The purpose of this paper is to determine the information needs and usage behaviour of rural children and to identify and describe the types of library services found in most rural areas. Based on the literature the researchers recommend that services and facilities should be implemented in the school libraries. Furthermore, the researchers suggest that the Department of Education should build a centre for library services in each circuit. It is strongly recommended that the Department of Education should become more involved and take ownership of school libraries.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper library and information service provision to children, the mission, aims and functions of libraries, the factors influencing the provision of library services to children in both developing and developed countries were dealt with.

Objective

The fundamental objective of this paper is to make recommendations with regard to the collections, facilities and services that should be provided for effective service rendering to rural children, as well as information organisation and retrieval in the school library, public library and community library to ensure resource provision to rural children.

The Aim of the Public Library

Although children in rural areas have a background of an oral-based culture, they have reading and information needs that cannot be met by means of this oral culture. Library and infor-

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Address for correspondence:
N. P. Mahwasane
Library
University of Venda,
Private Bag X5050
Thohoyandou, 0950 South Africa
E-mail: Nkhangweni.mahwasane@univen.ac.za

mation services can provide for the information needs of rural children in Africa where recorded information is not readily available in schools and homes. If children do not have access to books and other information sources at school or at home then they could obtain information from the library and information services if they exist. Therefore the nature and purpose of library and information services will be discussed to establish to what extent it could provide for the information needs of rural children. After a careful study of the literature the aims of the public library are set out below (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996; Australian Library and Information Association 2012):

- the public library, the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and the cultural development of the individual and social group.
- the child's library is concerned with the whole child and not just with school and learning.
- by developing literacy in the young the library can create the habitual adult reader and user of the library, instilling a positive view of libraries throughout adulthood.
- through its collections, and ultimately through reading, the public library contributes to children's leisure needs and their intellectual, emotional, social, educational and language development.
- the library has been seen as a major contributor to the development of literacy, which remains the primary aim of the service.
- the public library fulfils complementary social functions through its programme of ac-

tivities, promoting social interaction among young people, between children and other groups in the community, while fostering an awareness of the culture of others.

• the library hosts a collection of materials and makes them available to users when needed (Elkin and Lonsdale 1996:66; Library and Information Services Council (England) 1995; September 1993; Oosthuizen 1994; Odini 1990; Astralian Library and Information Association 2012).

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

User Services

The user service function of a library forms a crucial link between the users and the information sources in a library. Service rendering has much to do with the range of services that are provided by the library to its users.

Service Functions

For service rendering to be effective it should function as it is expected to. Then it will be able to meet the needs of the users successfully. Service functions performed in a library are activities that are concerned with service rendering. The services may be provided in the form of activities performed in the particular library. The activities may differ from one type of library to the other; for instance public libraries and school libraries or media centres may provide different services.

Service rendering is concerned with the personal services which are directed at both the needs and interests of a particular target group. Services refer to the user guidance functions and include information provision and reference work, user education, user advice and bibliotherapy. User guidance services contain all the elements of assistance, advice, guidance and stimulation. Library services are intended to assist and benefit the user (Wilkinson 1986; Christianson 1984; Goodrum 1986; Lynch 1986; South Africa Department of Basic Education 2012; Covert-Vail and Scott 2012; Department of Arts and Culture 2013; The Library and Information Services Transformation Charter 2014).

User Guidance Functions

According to Gericke (1996: 351-352) *"user guidance can be defined as the action whereby the user is guided and directed towards the satisfaction of some reading or information need."* This is the guidance provided to the user in order to facilitate the effective interaction between the record and the user. It is a professional guidance function, which has much to do with information provision and reference work, user instruction, user advice as well as bibliotherapy. Information retrieval is also regarded as a user guidance function. It encourages effective service provision. It forms part of the service functions. Gericke (1996) maintains that guidance includes the following:

• information provision and reference work;
• educating and instructing the user in the techniques of information and library use or user education;
• user advice, which implies guidance in respect of the choice of material and which is aimed at user motivation and stimulation; and
• specialised form of guidance aimed at improving the users insight into personal problems and which is known as bibliotherapy (Gericke 1996; South Africa Department of Basic Education 2012; The Charted Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) 2015).

Information Provision

Information provision as well as reference work has much to do with providing the user with relevant information by means of selection, evaluation and interpretation. Information provision is also regarded as an information retrieval function.

User advice is also linked to information provision and reference work. An example is when the librarian provides a referral service and the user receives advice on the other institutions that can provide different types of assistance (Gericke 1996; Buchholz 2011; Rosa 2015). Referral comes into play in cases where the librarian knows of an expert that can assist the user in a more appropriate way than the sources available in the library.

User Advice

Reader or user advisory service is a form of user guidance, which is concerned with effective utilization of library services. According to Barker (1993), all public libraries should provide reading advice aimed at motivating and stimu-

lating users to use information for children who want to read fiction or non-fiction books. Barker (1993) suggests the following means or ways be used to facilitate effective service rendering to children:

- providing individual assistance in as far as selecting of sources is concerned;
- posting notices concerning new and interesting sources in prominent locations;
- organising the collection in such a way that successful browsing will be possible;
- distributing book lists inside the library, as well as using modern communication media such as the local access cable channel outside the library;
- scheduling discussions of books with interested children, and presenting book talks to different organizations; and
- providing better access to fiction in the card catalogue or OPAC (Barker 1993; Lisalisabookjam 2014).

User Education

User education is concerned with the instruction and training given to the user by the librarian so that he/she will be able to make maximum use of the library and information sources. User education has to do with orientating, informing and instructing the user on how better to use both the library and information. It is concerned with both library training and information skills training. User education can take the forms discussed below:

(a) library orientation and information counselling – "user orientation or library orientation is usually superficial and confined to introducing the user to the layout of a library and the availability of facilities and services. It is also known as library orientation."

(b) bibliographic instruction – "the term bibliographic instruction is used when the user undergoes intensive training. This refers to the instruction of users in tracing sources and information by using different kinds of reference works."

(c) information literacy instruction – "information literacy instruction is a user education function aimed at instructing users in information skills so that they achieve information literacy which will enable them to:

- be aware of the power and value as well as misuse of information in society;
- be able to recognise their own information needs;
- be aware of the variety of communication media and information sources and distribution channels thereof;
- have the skills to trace and use a variety of information sources independently; and
- understand and be able to evaluate and manipulate the system used to organise information for the purpose of problem solving" (Gericke 1996; Arp 1990; Breivik 1989; Bhatti 2003; Mishra and Mahapatra 2013; Adegoke 2015; Brown 2015).

User Guidance for Effective Services to Rural Children

User guidance for effective service rendering is important because it is necessary to provide user guidance to learners in a rural context so that they can benefit maximally from the library services. However, differences in a rural environment may require adaptation of conventional services to children (The Charted Institute of library and information professionals (CILIP) 2015).

Information Provision and Reference Services

Reference services form an integral part of the various services that a library provides to its users. As previously mentioned, these services include directing the user to the information in a source or referring the person to the correct place for a solution of an information problem. The public library can provide children with a wide range of print and audio-visual, media, as well as staff skills in how to make use of information and providing follow-up services which benefit the illiterate community at large (Du plooy 1998; Luini 2012; Rosa 2015).

User Education to Rural Children

Considering that rural children come from a completely different background, as indicated by Sturges and Chimseu (1996) and Ogundipe (1994), it could be assumed that they have no idea of the resources and services offered by the library and how they function. In that respect, rural children need to be introduced in an

articulate way to the purpose and functions of a library. Tawete (1988) and Philip (2015 state that in non-formal education the librarian is regarded as a teacher who works together with other staff members. They all share the responsibility for teaching and learning skills.

Vaillancourt (2000) and Abu (2014) agree that, when working with children and young adults, the librarian should talk about what he/she is doing and why. While the librarian is using a catalogue, bibliography or electronic index, he/she should explain the meaning of concepts such as access point, cross-references, call numbers, citations and so on. If the librarian has time to escort the learners to the stocks to locate an item, the librarian must do so and explain the physical layout of the stocks and shelf order. Even if the child is not interested in what the librarian is explaining, some knowledge that he/she has picked up will help the child the next time he/she needs to use the library. Moreover, in both a developed and developing context, it is the responsibility of the librarian and teachers to educate students about the most appropriate search methods for different types of information. Vaillancourt (2000) and Abu (2014) stress that it is also important that learners learn to evaluate critically the information they receive on either the web or in print sources in order to determine its credibility. Often simply verbalising the steps in a reference search helps teach children how they can conduct a search on their own. The librarian should find out what formal instruction the school is providing in terms of information literacy and make sure that public library instruction (whether formal or informal) complements the curriculum. User education to children in developing countries is hindered by limitations such as lack of proper library buildings and the lack of relevant collections, facilities and user guidance (Vaillancourt 2000; IFLA 2006; Philip 2015).

Reader or User Advice

Tawete (1988) and Hall (2014) are of the opinion that in order to provide a better service, every librarian should respond positively to those users who are unable to find a book on the shelf and come to the desk for help. The librarian should also know his/her book collections and patrons' needs so that he/she will be able to act as a liaison between the books and the patrons

(Latrobe and Laughlin 1992; Tawete 1988; Lisal-isabookjam 2014).

According to Barker (1993), in order to render service effectively, staff members should be knowledgeable about books, reading and users, and they should be trained in different aspects of readers' advisory services.

According to Pearl (1992) and Tarulli (2015), for service rendering to be effective, the library should provide readers' advisory services to users whose mother tongue is not English. These services should also be promoted and marketed in order to attract intended or target users. Outreach services are also important for the target groups to become active library users and recipients of reader advisory services.

Freiband (1992) and The Reading Agency (2004) are of the opinion that in order to present an effective way of stimulating interest among children, who do not often use the library, the mass media for example radio and cable television may be used to highlight the library's programme and resources or services.

According to Latrobe and Laughlin (1992) and Tarulli (2015), for effective service rendering to children in an African context, book talks and story hours, which make use of folk tales, should include different ethnic versions of similar tales as well as African versions.

The picture sketched above seems to be the ideal to which library and information services should strive in rural areas although it could be an uphill battle considering all the constraints.

Libraries and Information Services in Developing Countries and Africa in Particular

The information infrastructure in most developing countries has certain fundamental deficiencies. There is a lack of postal and telecommunication systems. Those that are available do not function properly. There is little funding, particularly foreign exchange, for the maintenance of channels of communication distribution. There is inadequate trained manpower and an absence of properly stocked libraries. In some of the developing countries the morning newspaper arrives in the evening or the following day (Adimorah and Ugoji 1997; Assak 2000; Okiy 2003; United Nations 2012).

Poor transport systems and bad roads also affect the effective provision of information. In most African countries small numbers of isolat-

ed dwellings are grouped together to form villages. This makes it difficult to provide them with a proper communication system. In many developing countries the introduction of information technology has led to disappointment and disillusionment because the system has either fallen into disuse or because the information supplied has not been appropriate (Adimorah and Ugoji 1997; Al-Amin 2014; South Africa Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) and National Council for Library and Information Services (NCLIS) 2014).

In most of these countries there is no organised national information policy as such. Primary information is provided directly by organised information agencies in developing countries, such as libraries, documentation centres and archives, broadcasting corporations, departments of information and telecommunication, culture, education, external affairs trade and commerce, industries, finance planning, tourism and government printers. This result in unnecessary duplication of effort, since these organised information agencies are not coordinated (Adimorah and Ugoji 1997; Al-Amin 2014; Makori 2015).

According to Adimorah and Ugoji (1997), Okiy (2003) and Makori (2015) the main problem is the tremendous cost of running such organised information agencies effectively and efficiently. There are costs involved in installing and using telecommunication facilities, television sets, video cameras and tape recorders, developing a computerised database and running the production of posters, leaflets and booklets. The other problem in developing countries is the difficulty experienced in fostering interagency cooperation as well as liaison. The rural communities' information centres are regarded as rivals by many change agencies and they are also reluctant to cooperate. The extent of the use of the rural communities' information centres by the clients is determined by its location within the community (Adimorah and Ugoji 1997; United Nations 2012).

Resources to Support User Services

Although library and information services to rural areas are far from ideal, authors such as Freiband (1993), Latrobe (1992), Latrobe and Laughlin (1992), Dwyer (1992), and Researchers 'Use of Academic Libraries and their Services'

(2007) proposed the different kinds of resources required to support user services in an African context.

Library resources consist of collections, facilities, staff and funds. Resources take the form of good administrative support, an adequate budget, the necessary furniture and appropriate equipment to develop, accommodate or store, preserve, organise, evaluate and provide access to resources (Freiband 1993; IFLA 2015).

Collections Necessary for Rendering Effective Service

For service rendering to be successful, the collection should be readily available, relevant and should also contain different types of information sources. Also the distance from the library or inconvenient service hours, may prevent some people from being able to make fruitful use of the library services. This is particularly true of assistance to children in rural areas with sparse library facilities and services.

Different Types of Information Sources

The quality of the binding as well as the illustration of works should be superb (Latrobe and Laughlin 1992, 2015). Apart from books there are other materials, such as periodicals and newspapers, which should also form part of the collection. Preferably materials in rural libraries should be in African languages since most of the users in remote rural areas in South Africa are of African origin. Materials that stereotype African groups should be avoided. Whenever such materials are to be used they should not be used where they serve to promote misconceptions. In order to use such collections effectively, children should be encouraged to read critically in order to know and be aware of stereotyping (Latrobe and Laughlin 1992; IFLA 2015).

The Availability of Materials in the Mother Tongue

According to Latrobe and Laughlin (1992) and Maganda (2015) in order for the collection to support service rendering to children, the inadequate collection in African languages should be augmented with excellent books and non-print materials in African languages if they are available. Children are more interested in rhymes

and short stories. Freiband (1993) and The Library and Information Services (LIS) Transformation Charter (2014) and Maganda (2015) share the view that in order to facilitate effective service rendering, there should be appropriate materials in the mother tongue about African culture or countries and topics of interest to them. Such a collection should be developed, organised and evaluated carefully. It must also be able to be accessed effectively by both the library staff and library users (Latrobe and Laughlin 1992; Freiband 1993; Iwara 2015).

Relevance of Collections

Teachers should also be provided with enough reference sources for teaching and learning. They should work with library management in order to sensitise them to the needs of children (Latrobe and Laughlin 1992). Service rendering may be effective if the relevant collections are available. Obtaining and distributing English bibliographies, which review African language books, may do this. Materials about specific cultural groups should also be collected. Moreover; the librarian should be aware of different reading preferences when selecting books.

Information Organisation and Retrieval

Latrobe and Laughlin (1992) and Malanga (2015) suggest that facilities should be useful to the users. The library catalogue should facilitate student access to the collections. Sometimes these library catalogues are found to be obstacles to children's abilities to access library materials in that they meet neither the children's curricular or personal needs.

Catalogues should contain adequate subject headings or access to subjects covered in the collection and clearly reflects the content of the materials that are of interest to children. Lack of an adequate catalogue will result in difficulties in accessing the library resources on particular topics of interest to African children or in African languages for children who are not English-speaking. This may lead to failure to identify related aspects of the subjects (Latrobe and Laughlin 1992; Malanga 2015).

Appropriate facilities are required for effective service rendering if value is to be added to catalogues and information systems in order to provide information which will help children in making informed selections of documents or sources to use.

Abstracts, table of contents and an index also add value to the information system (Dwyer 1992; The James J. Kelly Library 2015). In order to facilitate rendering of service to children, the librarian should assign subject headings based on the child's age, grade, reader interest level, literacy genre, physical form, developmental values, themes, uses of materials, multicultural designations, sex role, and also ethnic groups. The indexing system should be designed in such a way that it will meet the needs of children (Latrobe and Laughlin 1992; Owino 2015; The James J. Kelly Library 2015).

Facilities and Equipment

According to Tawete (1988) and Greenwood et al. (2008), facilities necessary for effective service rendering include accommodation, reading space, shelving, tables and chairs, and lighting as well as various equipment required to make use of various media, such as computer terminals. These facilities have an influence on the provision of library services. When the facilities are adequate, the services rendered in the library will also be satisfactory depending on the professional attitudes of the staff (Agbo 2015).

A school library is viewed as a learning laboratory in that all media print and non-print materials are used purposefully and planned and integrated with other learning programmes. Facilities can be said to be necessary for effective service rendering when libraries are able to provide the space for reading, meetings, discussions and exhibitions. Especially in rural areas, houses are meant to shelter people, their livestock, the children and pets but are poorly lit. As a result, the village or town library is a quiet place for children to read, listen to audio cassettes and view films.

In developing countries libraries may improve the availability of material by:
- opening many library branches if possible; and
- starting book box services for learners to establish centres (Tawete 1988).

The library should consist of rooms, which are quiet and peaceful, a computer room and internet room (Rowley et al. 1998). For effective service rendering, the library should have a chil-

dren's room, which should be bright, with a comforting site, low shelves with colourful books on different topics and a librarian to guide children (Freiband 1993; Barker 1993; Rowley et al. 1998; Greenwood et al. 2008; Agbo 2015).

Staff

In rural areas where poor literacy impedes access to textual information the librarian should serve as an important link between the school, the community as well as the family. Staff members serving as teacher-librarians should be in possession of relevant qualifications and be properly trained to do the library work (Latrobe and Laughlin 1992; Ogundipe 1994).

Factors Influencing the Provision of Library Services

Libraries provide services to users through both printed and electronic media, which presuppose that the potential users are able to read, know how to use books to find information and know how to apply (use) the information obtained (Malanga 2015). There are factors that can challenge effective services if not addressed. Factors that may influence the effectiveness of library services are discussed below.

Availability and Accessibility of Library and Information Services

Considering circumstances that lead to the availability and accessibility of Information, it seems that people of developing and developed countries depend on two different information systems. In developed countries most schools have a school library, class libraries, library lessons and qualified teacher-librarians. Ogundipe (1994) and Iwara (2015) state that in developing countries only a small number of primary and post-primary schools have relatively functional libraries. These libraries are not properly equipped and funded, although most of the publications required can be acquired locally. In developing countries libraries are still fighting with the problems of a scarcity of current textbooks and journals (Ogundipe 1994; Iwara 2015).

Economic Conditions in Rural Areas

Another contributing factor that leads to the poor provision of library services to rural areas is the lack of industrialisation which results in poor economic conditions. While developed countries are industrialised and rich, developing countries are less industrialised and as a result they have poor economies. The rising inflationary trends in the economy of developing countries have resulted in the skyrocketing prices of books, diaries, digests, and other forms of publications. This has put these materials beyond the reach of low-income earners and students. The government's annual budget provision is affected by the realities of inflation. As a result, the provision of library services to children is affected adversely.

The acquisition and maintenance of audio-visual materials, which are required for information dissemination by libraries and other information agencies, have been affected by the financial crunch. The children's access to information is also affected. Libraries providing services to children, who should have information to do their school work, are also under-funded. As a result of the poor quality and quantity of the library resources and the consequent low rate of information, the children seldom make use of the library (Mohammed 1994; Malanga 2015).

Considering the socio-economic conditions referred to in the discussion above it seems doubtful that conventional library services could provide for the needs of rural communities.

CONCLUSION

In this paper library and information service provision to children, the mission, aims and functions of libraries as well as factors influencing the provision of library services to children in both the developing and developed countries were dealt with. Library services should be effective so that the library will be able to play its role to its users. For effective use of the library services different library services should be offered as this helps the users to find their way in and around the library. User education and user advice are some of the forms of user guidance which is concerned with effective utilization of library services. User education is important to urban children as much as to rural children although they come from a completely different backgrounds.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the problems experienced with regard to rendering school library services to

children, the researchers recommend practical solutions as proposed in the guidelines below.

It is suggested that the prescribed books of the previous teaching system should be catalogued and kept in the libraries. They will serve as good reference materials for both the teachers and learners since they are informative. Some schools have many such textbooks, which are no longer in use. An arrangement should be made to remove those books from schools that have extra copies and no longer need them, and to give them to schools that are in need of reference sources of this kind.

It is strongly recommended that the Department of Education should become involved and take ownership of school libraries. Intensive monitoring and supervision should be done by the qualified coordinators who have knowledge of library activities, such as cataloguing. For effective implementation of library services in rural areas, each circuit office should be provided with a qualified, knowledgeable and interested librarian to supervise school libraries within the circuit.

The Department of Education and the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture should visit the school libraries in this area to assess the condition of school libraries, so that they will be able to plan accordingly and improve the school libraries. Furthermore, the school library services should be monitored and supervised by professional librarians who also have an interest in librarianship and libraries and extensive knowledge of library matters in general.

The following services and facilities should be implemented in the school libraries: lending facilities, reference service, user education, information provision, reader advisory services, user advice, and Internet services. This will allow learners to understand how to use a library effectively, even those at the tertiary level. These services will serve as a platform for providing access to information.

In addition, the researchers suggest that the Department of Education should build a centre for library services in each circuit. The centre for library services should be well equipped. It should be an ideal library consisting of different services. This will bring the school library services closer to the learners. Learners will also have the opportunity to see what an ideal library looks like, and will have the opportunity to learn about the different types of services in the library.

LIMITATIONS

There are suggestions and recommendations dating back concerning how library service rendering to children can be improved, but the implementation part is still a challenge. To overcome this, the authorities should try to implement the suggestions and recommendations stipulated by the researchers to allow development in as far as library services to children is concerned.

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