Constructive and Contemporary Library Services for All Ages in Best Public Libraries of USA

Dr. Sarika Sawant
Asst. Professor, SHPT School of library Science, SNDT Women's University
Email: sarika.sawant@libraryinfosc.sndt.ac.in

Abstract

Public libraries are a world-wide phenomenon. They exist in a variety of societies, in differing cultures and at different stages of development ensuring their long term value. The present paper discusses library services and training programs offered in three five star public libraries of USA. These libraries provide all types of services and arrange programs to serve all age groups to fulfill the key role of the public libraries emphasized in the IFLA/UNESCO public library manifesto (2001). Services that public libraries provide which are listed in paper are truly creative and show the public library's role in teaching and learning.

Keywords: Public libraries, USA, User services, Library services, Public libraries – United States

Introduction

Public libraries are a world-wide phenomenon. They existin a variety of societies, in differing cultures and at different stages of development ensuring their long term value.
According to IFLA/UNESCO public library manifesto (2001)

'A public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization. It provides access to knowledge, information and works of the imagination through a range of resources and services and is equally available to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status and educational attainment'.

The Purposes of the Public Library

The primary purposes of the public library are to provide resources and services in a variety of media (book and non book) to meet the needs of individuals and groups at varied age for education, information and personal development including recreation and leisure. They have an important role in the development and maintenance of a democratic society by giving the individual access to a wide and varied range of knowledge, ideas and opinions.

The public library is often seen as a place for leisure reading and for information, but public libraries may also play a dynamic role in the teaching learning process.

Key Role of Public Library

Freedom of Information: The public library should be able to represent all ranges of human experience and opinion, free from the risk of censorship.

Access for all: Local needs Public libraries are locally based services for the benefit of the local community and should provide community information services. The services and collections they provide should be based on local needs, which should be assessed regularly.

Local culture: The public library should be a key agency in the local community for the collection, preservation and promotion of local culture in all its diversity. This can be achieved in a variety of ways, for example, the maintenance of local history collections, exhibitions, storytelling, publishing of items of local interest and developing interactive programmes on local themes.

Library buildings: Library buildings play an important part in public library provision. They should be designed to reflect the functions of the library service, be accessible to all in the community and be sufficiently flexible to accommodate new and changing services. They should be located close to other community activities, for example, shops and cultural centres.

Resources: To fulfill its roles satisfactorily the public library must have adequate resources, not just when it is established but also on a continuing basis, to enable it to sustain and develop services that meet the needs of the local community.

A fundamental principle of the public library is that its services must be available to all and not directed to one group in the community to the exclusion of others. Provision should be made to ensure services are equally available to minority groups who for some reason are not able to use the mainstream services, for example, linguistic minorities, people with physical and sensory disabilities or those living in remote communities who are unable to reach library buildings.

The public library has to aim to serve all citizens and groups. An individual is never too young or too old to use a library. The public library has the following potential target groups.

- People at all ages and at all stages of life: — children — young adults — adults.

- Individuals and groups of people with special needs: — people from different cultures and ethnic groups including indigenous people — people with disabilities, e.g., blind and partially sighted, hearing impaired — housebound people — institutionally confined people, e.g., in hospitals, prisons.

- Institutions within the wider community network: — educational, cultural and voluntary organizations and groups in the community — the business community — the governing body of the parent organization, e.g., local authority (IFLA/UNESCO public library manifesto, 2001).

Role of public library in the teaching learning process

As it is very much evident that academic libraries support teaching learning process, but public

libraries in USA and other developed nations strongly support and play important role in teaching learning process. The public library is a key agency in supporting the educational and learning needs of every person in the community. They are a vital resource for helping young children learn to read, for providing homework help for all levels of school, for a wealth of resources for homeschooling families, and for adults continuing their education by offering various services/conducting training programs to the people. In fact, competitiveness in the 21st century demands that people not stop learning when they leave the classroom. Staying relevant in a rapidly changing workforce will require familiarity and facility with technology, as well as increased skills in successfully navigating information online. Libraries are part of a seamless web of educational opportunity that brings together trained information professionals and an array of resources that can be utilized inside the library or online 24/7. Public libraries are known as great places to study and a complement to libraries in schools, universities, and colleges (American Library Association (ALA), 2010).

The author of the paper received Academic Research Libraries (USA) Attendance Grant Award on behalf of Asia Pacific to participate in International Federation Library Association Conference (IFLA) top most library science conference which was held at Columbus, Ohio, USA during Aug 13-19, 2016. ExLibris and Sage were the sponsors of ARL Attendance Grant Award. During her stay she visited many prestigious academic and public libraries such as Ohio State University Library, Billy Ireland Cartoon Library, OCLC, University of Cincinnati Library, Chicago Public Library, Ela Area Public Library and Columbus Metropolitan Library. In this paper, she has summarized her experience of services that public libraries offer to their community, emphasizing their role in the learning activities of the members in the community, and in encouraging young people to read, to enhance their learning.

Ela Area Public Library: Lake Zurich, Chicago, Illinois (eapl.org/)

Named for George Ela, the area's first postmaster, the Library collection was first maintained by the Lake Zurich Woman's Club. In 1972, the Library opened its doors in the basement of Lake Zurich's St. Francis de Sales Church. Recently the library was renovated in 2015 and introduced 3 D printer for users to build, invent, tinker, learn and create.

Training programmes are offered to users not only for educational attainments but recreation, to make them creative, for fun, to fulfill their curiosity, some of the engaging services and training programs designed for different age groups are as follows:

-how to use Google earth: in this training session library staff teaches how to locate particular location, routes, distance, satellite mode etc. Even an advanced iPhone photography session is conducted to make their aware the different function in iphone camera and how it can be best utilized.

-Ask authors to speak: Authors are invited to speak about their books

-Training Microsoft Powerpoint 2013, Microsoft Publisher 2013, Mac Operating System: these are particularly useful to adult learners to introduce them with new computer operating and office suites.

-3 D Design: Softwares that can be used to design 3d objects are taught to users

-Aspiring Authors Workshop: teaches aspiring authors skills in writing poetry and short stories. Sessions focus on character, setting, plot, conflict, and theme. Published authors participate and give advice on these topics.

-Scanning old slides or 35mm negatives to digital images: By teaching users libraries helps them to preserve their memories/information by converting into digital format.

Chicago Public Library: Chicago, Illinois(http://www.chipublib.org/)

The library opened in1873. Their 80 locations in Chicago provide innovative library services, technologies and tools as per Chicagoans' need to reach their goals and to establish the city as a competitive force in the global marketplace.

Some of the important services and training programmes are as follows:
- Popcorn style reading: students read a passage, they only read as much as they can handle, and then say 'popcorn' and the name of another student, who reads next. This adds a fun element in reading and motivates children to develop a reading habit.
- Preschool story time: stories, rhymes, songs, and other fun activities just for preschooler
- Children's book club: The book will be read aloud by the librarian, and each section discussed
- The above three activities are aimed at young children, to create a life-long library use habit, which will help them in their future learning activities. In addition, the following activities are aimed at older users:
- Artist's Digital Portfolio Creation Workshop: teaches how to create digital portfolio in a digital format (e.g. website, video, etc)
- Language connection: users get chance to improve language skills in French, Chinese or Spanish (to name a few), library help to explore the study of languages through library resources, cultural field trips, games and much more.
- College planning: Where discussion takes place about planning aspects involved when applying to college. Suggested strategies for getting the most in scholarships, financial aid and grants

Columbus Metropolitan Library: Columbus, Ohio(www.columbuslibrary.org/)

It was established in1872. Columbus Metropolitan Library (CML) inspires reading, shares resources, and connects scores of people across the region and beyond. Through Ready for Kindergarten programs and Homework Help Centers, library ensure children enter school ready to learn and have access to the resources they need to thrive in the classroom. Library users navigate jobs searches, earn GEDs (General Educational Development), pass civil service exams, find employment, or become prepared for college because of the library. For many, the computers in the library are their only access to the Internet and basic help and information.

Services are categorized as

1. Ready for Kindergarten
Library holds thousands of story times every year. It's a fun and interactive way to teach children Ready for Kindergarten skills such as words, songs and vocabulary. BOOK LESSONS by introducing picture books according to babies toddlers and preschoolers.
2. Reading Buddies: One-on-one reading practice with library staff or volunteers

Third Grade Reading Guarantee: Library supports Ohio's Third Grade Reading Guarantee with programs and resources to help students improve reading skills to go on to fourth grade.

3. Home work help: library provides what students need to succeed in school: with support from staff and volunteers, Welcoming spaces to study and learn, Computers and printers, School supplies, Resource books

Apart from these services the library conducts the following programmes/activities.

YouMedia: It allows Teens to create music, videos, digital art, and photographers with mentors ready to help!

Enrichment activities with students from The Ohio State University

Books and Pizza: Users canhang out with friends, at a slice, and learn about new and interesting books for teens

Career Institute: 9 Week Course focused on helping students learn the skills to find a job or career.

Conclusion

It was observed that public libraries are making physical and online resources available to users of all ages. Even for small toddlers they have created physical space – a learning environment in such a innovative way that parents tents to come to library with them. Not only parents but library staff, community volunteers and students read and sing with these toddlers. For teens furniture is designed esthetically so that they can sit comfortably and enjoy reading even can do web browsing on big desktops, ipads, kindle etc. Even home work guides are made available to the kids to encourage them to complete their homework independently.

In most of these public libraries resources especially for school kids which may require 3 D printers to them to complete their homework is available in particular time of the day. Also printers and photocopying machines are made available with little cost. Of course any user can avail these facilities as well.

According to Public Libraries in the United States Survey (Fiscal Year 2012), that surveyed 9000 public libraries of USA, it was observed that more than 92.6 million people attended the 4.0 million programs at public libraries. Attendance showed a 1-year increase of 5.2 percent and a 10-year increase of 54.4 percent. According to ALA research (2010) 79.6% of public libraries offer online homework resources and American adults report the most common purpose for using public library computers is to meet educational needs. The figures are promising and public libraries are employing various strategies to illustrate, articulate, and demonstrate their value by delivering contemporary library services rather enhancing teaching learning process. Public libraries are providing more Internet–based services and e- resources by adapting to changing social needs and economic circumstances. By providing the amazingly engaging activities listed above the public libraries are motivating students to read, and are trying to make the learning process enjoyable.

References

American Library Association. (2010). SupportingLearners in US public libraries. Retrieved from http://www.ala.org/research/sites/ala.org.research/files/content/initiatives/plftas/issuesbriefs/learnersissuebrief09.pdf

Gill, R., Clubb B., Glashoff, I., Hassner, K., Hayrapetian, N. &Pestell, R. 2001. *The public library service: IFLA/UNESCO guidelines for development*. München: K.G. Saur.

IMLS 2012 Public Libraries Survey Report issued. (2015). Retrieved fromhttps://www.imls.gov/news-events/news-releases/imls-2012-public-libraries-survey-report-issued?CategoryId=1&pg=3

Jaeger, P. T., Bertot, J. C., Kodama, C. M., Katz, S. M. &DeCoster, E. J. (2011). Describing and measuring the value of public libraries: The growth of the Internet and the evolution of library value*First Monday*, *16*(11). Retrieved from http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/3765/3074