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**MOBILE LIBRARY SERVICE IN RURAL SCHOOLS IN AKWA IBOM STATE: THE PROSPECTS, CHALLENGES AND REMEDIES**

**Uduakobong Oscar UDOH, *Ph.D***  
**Main Library**  
**University of Uyo, Uyo**

**AND**

**Unwana Udo OKORIE**  
**College of Education**  
**Afaha Nsit**

**ABSTRACT**

*This study was to assess the mobile library service in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised librarians, head teachers, primary school teachers and pupils. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 10 librarians, 50 head teachers, 100 teachers and 200 pupils, giving a total of 360 respondents that constituted the sample size used for the study. The Instrument used in this study for data collection was a questionnaire titled: "Mobile Library Service in Rural Schools in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire (MLSRSAKSQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert in test, measurement and evaluation from university of Uyo to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness and completeness of the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.80 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive analysis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. The study concluded that the various challenges facing mobile library service in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State are, limited memory of mobile devices, limitation of a small screen size, dependent and work for restricted range of devices, difficulty to select a display model, limitations in existing technologies, problem with PDF support on blackberry devices, problem with supporting audio and video. One of the recommendations made was that the government should make adequate funds available for the acquisition of information resources and the provision of quality mobile library services to the rural schools in Akwa Ibom State.*

**KEYWORDS: Mobile Library Service, Rural Schools, Prospects, Challenges, Remedies and Akwa Ibom State**

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## Introduction

Mobile library services are essential to the educational, political, and social development of rural schools. The information gap between urban and rural areas can be bridged by effective mobile library services. The federal, state, and local governments have the responsibility to better the lives of rural people by reaching out to rural schools through effective mobile library services (Ebiwolate, 2010). The fundamental aim of mobile libraries is to provide timely, accurate, pertinent, and reliable information for their users. According to Olowu (2004), librarians are devoted to improving access to information, and satisfying the user is paramount. There is a growing recognition that mobile library services, particularly in public libraries, are an integral part of national socioeconomic development and improvement of the general quality of life. According to Kibat (1990), cited by Ebiwolate (2010), mobile library services have reached segments of rural schools that would not otherwise have any library facilities at all. The bookmobile and its counterparts in the Philippines have brought improvements to rural schools, stimulated reading interest, and increased general awareness of health, nutrition, child care, family planning, etc. The development of mobile library services has shifted the applications in libraries from the traditional to hybrid libraries, then automated libraries, digital archives stages, library 2.0 and mobile phone services. Akanwa (2013) stated that the mobile library is one of the main avenues through which the public library provides library services to children who live in rural areas. Mobile libraries are vehicles that can be used to take library resources from the main or central library to clients that live far away from the library.

Mobile library refers to the wide range including the resources, the services, the information all available to be used easily on mobile devices (Clark & Pan, 2014). That then raises the equally tricky question of what devices to include in the scope, which could be limited to the small screen hand held device with a full web browser, or include also the tablet device within it. According to Aina (2004), who stated that other types of libraries are meant for a specific group of users, the mobile library is not restricted to any group of users. It is expected to serve all kinds of people, including young children, people with disabilities, or even people who, for one reason or another, are incapacitated. It means that the mobile library is a library for all, and that is why library services for children are provided. Ebiwolate (2010) pointed out that mobile library services were introduced by regional governments in the 1960's and 1970's using public libraries. They were used to provide services to primary and secondary schools as well as to villagers. This has almost gone extinct due to poor maintenance culture, but the benefits cannot be overlooked. This laudable initiative, which was directly managed by public libraries, should be leveraged as a sure means of providing information to

rural dwellers for societal transformation. According to Abolaji (2009), the Rivers State Library Board launched a mobile library, operated from a boat, in 1978. The boat library attracted visitors from all corners of the country, apart from users in the Rivers State, who were the primary clientele for areas that are not easily accessible by easy means of transport. For easy accessibility and utilization, book-boxes should be stationed in centrally located premises like schools, churches, mosques, and town halls.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Over the years, mobile library services have been an issue for both beginner and experienced librarians trying to stay relevant in a mobile society. Librarians have been devoted to improving access to information and satisfying the user, which is paramount. Libraries have been around for a very long time and have traditionally been seen as collections of information and services. However, mobile libraries have always played a significant role in enabling people to engage with all kinds of information and knowledge resources in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State. Mobile library services have an issue of growing, and this requires greater collaboration between academics, industry, corporations, and government. Mobile libraries have the potential to proliferate, and we will witness a situation in which the mobile will definitely be used as a tool to spread learning across the country.

### **Objective of the Study**

1. To find out the prospect of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State
2. To examine the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State
3. To determine the remedies to the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State

### **Research Questions**

1. What is the prospect of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What are the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State?
3. What are the remedies to the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State?

## Conceptual Review

### Concept of Library and Library Services

Library refers to a growing area of interactive and social tools on the web that create and share dynamic content. A library is a collection of books, periodicals, or other materials, primarily written and printed (Merriam-Webster 2020). A "library" refers to an apartment in which literary, musical, artistic, or reference materials (such as books, manuscripts, recordings, or films) are kept for use but not for sale. Marshall and Sollenberger (2013) stated that services offered by a library are variously described as library services, information services, or a combination of library and information services, although different institutions and sources define such terminology differently. According to Lalrohlui (2021), a library's collection can include books, periodicals, newspapers, manuscripts, films, maps, prints, documents, microform, CDs, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, Blu-ray Discs, e-books, audiobooks, databases, table games, video games, and other formats. A library is a collection of books or a building where collections of books are stored. Libraries have been around for a very long time and have traditionally been seen as collections of information and services. Curran, Murray, Norrby, and Christian (2016) stated that libraries have always played a significant role in enabling people to engage with all kinds of information and knowledge resources.

A "library" refers to the collection or group of collections of books and/or other print or non-print materials organized and maintained for use (reading, consultation, study, research, etc.). According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), the library is the pivot of the educational enterprise, providing a platform for knowledge sharing aimed at revitalizing Nigerian schools through the provision of current books and journals. A library is a collection of formats that are organized by information professionals or other experts who provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and offer targeted services and programs with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences with the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole. Library services, in the words of Nnadozie (2007), may be classified into technical and readers' services. Library services involve the totality of assistance provided by the library to its users. These services, to a large extent, determine the well-being of the library user, educationally, emotionally, and otherwise. Achebe (2008) defines the library as a collection of books and other non-book materials housed, organized, and interpreted to meet the yearning needs of people for information, knowledge, recreation, aesthetics, research, and enjoyment. The definition of a library has changed as its functions have changed since its inception.

## Concept of Mobile Library Services

Mobile library services refer to the large vehicle that contains many library books and goes to different places so that people can borrow the books. Mobile libraries bring resources outside of the library's fixed location to users who otherwise may not get a chance to benefit from them (Princh, 2020). Mobile libraries are an advantageous addition to libraries and a library's services. Mobile libraries are vehicles that can be used to take library resources from the main or central library to clients that live far away from the library (Hisham & Abdullah 2018). Mobile libraries are collections of books arranged in vehicles and so staffed as to provide a library service capable of being directed to communities which are often, though not exclusively, rural (LISBDNETWORK 2016). Mobile libraries refer to library services and materials that are available 24 hours a day on any type of device. Mobile Libraries are social institutions that connect people with other people and people with information. It is a time for libraries to take advantage of mobile technology (Bhoj, 2020). Mobile technology will assist both novice and experienced librarians in remaining relevant in a mobile society. Mobile library services and materials (such as Internet access, large print books, and audiobooks) may be customized for the locations and populations served.

Mobile library services have to grow, and this requires greater collaboration between academics, industry, corporations, and government. In the current scenario, mobile libraries have the potential to proliferate, and we will witness a situation in which the mobile will definitely be used as a tool to spread learning across the country (Vishwakarma, Maurya, & Govil, 2013). A mobile library is a vehicle designed for use as a library. It is designed to hold books on shelves in such a way that when the vehicle is parked, they can be accessed by readers. Mobile libraries are often used to provide library services to villages and city suburbs that have no library buildings (EDUCALINGO, 2021). They can also service groups or individuals who have difficulty accessing libraries, for example, occupants of retirement homes. As well as regular books, a bookmobile might also carry large-print books, audiobooks, and computers. Mobile library services have been known by many names throughout history, including traveling library, library wagon, book wagon, book truck, library-on-wheels, and book auto service (Bashaw, 2010). Mobile library services are expanding the reach of traditional libraries by transporting books to potential readers and providing library services to people in otherwise underserved locations (such as remote areas) and/or circumstances (such as residents of retirement homes).

## Prospects and Needs for Mobile Libraries in Rural Schools

The rural population suffers from acute low productivity, social and economic retrogression, primarily as a result of ignorance, which is also caused by either inadequate or total lack of information dissemination. Access to information is also critical to letting people know their entitlements to welfare benefits and sources of support to overcome social exclusion. The diverse nature of rural communities indicates that their information needs are many and multidimensional. However, it is very important to determine the totality of their information needs. In Akwa Ibom State, there is no comprehensive document on the information needs of rural inhabitants. There arises the need to reappraise the problem of literacy among the rural communities since it affects their access to, and utilization of, information. According to Aina (2004), non-literate users are those who cannot read and write in any language, and those who have barely acquired skills or even acquired reading skills. As stated earlier, a mobile library can eradicate illiteracy and liberate literacy. Moreover, the needs for mobile libraries in rural areas include:

- ❖ **Health Information:** On how individuals can, prevent different diseases that affect them, and awareness of available healthcare delivery and what it costs.
- ❖ **Legal Matters:** Information is needed on laws that affect rural dwellers. Such laws range from marriage to land.
- ❖ **Crime and Safety:** Information is required on how to prevent crimes, report crimes, the role of law enforcement agents, etc.
- ❖ **Transportation:** They need information on the cost of bicycles, motorcycles, and vehicles and where to obtain them. They need information about road construction and maintenance.
- ❖ **Policies and Government:** Information is needed on the political rights of the people and how they can exercise such rights.

Apparently, as noted by El-Kalash, Mohammed and Ahmed (2014), the amount of needed information by rural inhabitants in almost all their endeavours is quite large. As a result, sustainable rural development in rural areas can only be achieved if their rural dwellers require effective, timely, unbiased, accessible, comprehensive, and relevant information. Information is the raw material for development for both urban and rural students. Prosperity, progress, and development of any nation depend upon the nation's ability to acquire, produce, access, and use pertinent information. Illiteracy is higher in rural areas and compounds the cycle of poverty in rural communities. Mobile libraries, by their nature, target their

services to meet the needs of these rural communities, even the elderly and other less mobile people, who may find it difficult to reach the nearest static libraries. The need for a mobile library in rural areas is closely related to the need for a more organic service to meet the information needs of rural people. In rural communities, it is observed that people live without electricity and no other access to reading materials or information devices and resources like radio, television, or the internet. Therefore, the decision to provide mobile library services in rural communities is a prospective avenue for literacy liberation and illiteracy eradication.

### **Challenges of Mobile Library Services in Rural Schools and their Respective Remedies**

Mobile library services in rural schools are facing different challenges, and these challenges must be addressed accordingly if librarians want to remain relevant in the delivery of library services in rural schools. The following reveals challenges, such as the following: limited memory of mobile devices, limitation of a small screen size, dependent and work for restricted range of devices, difficulty to select a display model, limitations in existing technologies, problem with pdf support on blackberry devices, problem with supporting audio and video hindering mobile library services in rural schools (Kumbhar & Pawar, 2014). The following sub-themes contain the challenges of mobile library services and their respective remedies.

**Limited Memory of Mobile Devices:** Present mobile devices are limited by the speed of accessing the internet, small screens, slow processing, and limited storage capabilities. One of the most important barriers is the limited memory of mobile devices.

**Limitation of a Small Screen Size:** The formation of content that is suitable for a desktop computer may not be suitable for a mobile device because of the limitation of a small screen size.

**Dependent and Work for Restricted Range of Devices:** Some mobile libraries are dependent and work for restricted range of devices but a successful one works for a broad range of devices and is device independent.

**Difficulty to Select a Display Model:** Library professionals find it difficult to select a display model because display models for various operating systems and browsers vary.

**Limitations in Existing Technologies:** Limitations in existing technologies, present operating systems, and web browsers make it a

challenge for mobile library creators. They presently lack the capability or flexibility for an application to be displayed properly on all devices.

***Problem with PDF support on blackberry devices:*** The most mobile library has links to learning resources in Adobe PDF format. But there is a problem with PDF support on Blackberry devices. A Blackberry user cannot view a PDF document using his or her web browser.

***Problem with Supporting Audio and Video:*** This is a great challenge for the future, as large and complex learning objects require flash, shockwave, Java applets, and other plug-ins because the mobile library site has links to a wide variety of audio and video files (Kumbhar & Pawar, 2014). There is a problem with supporting audio and video for the model being tested, and all of these may not work on all mobile devices.

### **Remedies to the Challenges of Mobile Library Services in Rural Schools**

Information in the mobile library are raw material for the development of rural students. Mobile library brings prosperity, progress, and development of any nation depend upon the nation's ability to acquire, produce, access, and use pertinent information (Abissat, 2008). Mobile libraries should conduct analyses and make smart decisions, such as supporting staff education, exploring partnerships, new funding models, and being ready to compromise when it comes to their traditional information delivery models. protect themselves from deceptive content agreements with third-party providers. We want the knowledge of mobile library to flow through the field and not only in the hands of recent library school graduates. They want to inform users about the thousands of free mobile books available from initiatives such as Project Gutenberg to create opportunities to educate staff, establish local expertise and encourage dialogue by providing training sessions and professional development options (Ejiroghene, 2020). Most lectures or discussion groups or include such information on their websites, blogs, or newsletters. As the use of mobile library services grows, library staff will need to learn and use the technology to serve library users where they are, and libraries will face management, funding, and training challenges in meeting this need. Below are the recommended remedies to the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools.

- Defining what amount and type of information is appropriate
- Redefinition of sizes of texts, images, graphic and tables etc.
- Broaden the capacities and flexibility
- Use a program to recognize the device and select display model



- Mobile library developers should maintain a standard to display contents properly on devices
- Documents widely used on the mobile library site should be re-organized into html for viewing with a blackberry
- Redesigning the device to handle multimedia file types:

## Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State. The population of the study comprised librarians, head teachers, primary school teachers and pupils. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 10 librarians, 50 head teachers, 100 teachers and 200 pupils, giving a total of 360 respondents that constituted the sample size used for the study. The Instrument used in this study for data collection was a questionnaire titled: "Mobile Library Service in Rural Schools in Akwa Ibom State Questionnaire (MLSRSAKSQ)". Face and content validation of the instrument was carried out by an expert in test, measurement and evaluation from university of Uyo to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness and completeness of the study under consideration. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.80 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive analysis. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

## Results

**Research Questions 1:** The research question sought to find out the needs for mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed on the data (see table 1).

**Table 1: Percentage analysis of the needs for mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State**

| NEEDS                   | FREQUENCY  | PERCENTAGE  |
|-------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Health Information      | 156        | 43.33**     |
| Legal Matters           | 52         | 14.44       |
| Crime and Safety        | 87         | 24.17       |
| Transportation          | 26         | 7.22*       |
| Policies and Government | 39         | 10.83       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>            | <b>360</b> | <b>100%</b> |

\*\* The highest percentage frequency

\* The least percentage frequency

SOURCE: Field survey

The above table 1 presents the percentage analysis of the needs for mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (43.33%) of the respondents affirmed that health information is the need for mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State, while the least percentage (7.22%) of the respondents stated that the need for mobile library service in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State is transportation. The results therefore mean that the greatest needs for mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State is Health Information need.

**Research Questions 2:** The research question sought to find out the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 2).

**Table 2: Percentage analysis of the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State**

| CHALLENGES                                                         | FREQUENCY  | PERCENTAGE  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Limited Memory                                                     | 71         | 19.72       |
| Limitation to a small screen size                                  | 62         | 17.22       |
| Work for restricted range of devices                               | 51         | 14.17       |
| Difficulty to select display model                                 | 80         | 22.22**     |
| Limitation in existing technologies                                | 12         | 3.33*       |
| Problem with PDF support and Blackberry devices                    | 47         | 13.06       |
| Problem with supporting audio and Video for the model being tested | 37         | 10.28       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                       | <b>360</b> | <b>100%</b> |

\*\* The highest percentage frequency

\* The least percentage frequency

**SOURCE: Field survey**

The above table 2 presents the percentage analysis of the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (22.22%) of the respondents affirmed that the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State is the difficulty to select display model, while the least percentage (3.33%) of the respondents stated that the challenge is the limitation in existing technologies. The results therefore mean that the greatest challenge of

mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State is difficulty to select display model.

**Research Questions 3:** The research question sought to find out the remedies to the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State. To answer the research question, percentage analysis was performed on the data, (see table 3).

**Table 3: Percentage analysis of the remedies to the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State**

| REMEDIES                                                                                              | FREQUENCY  | PERCENTAGE  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-------------|
| Defining what amount and type of information is appropriate                                           | 69         | 19.17       |
| Redefinition of sizes of texts, images, graphic and tables etc.                                       | 73         | 20.28**     |
| Broaden the capacities and flexibility                                                                | 62         | 17.22       |
| Use a programme to recognize the device and select display model                                      | 53         | 14.72       |
| Mobile library developers should maintain a standard to display contents properly on devices          | 44         | 12.22       |
| Document widely used on the library site should be re-organized into HTML for viewing with Blackberry | 32         | 8.89        |
| Redesigning the device to handle multimedia file types                                                | 27         | 7.5*        |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                                                                                          | <b>360</b> | <b>100%</b> |

\*\* The highest percentage frequency

\* The least percentage frequency

**SOURCE: Field survey**

The above table 3 presents the percentage analysis of the remedies to the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State. From the result of the data analysis, it was observed that the highest percentage (20.28%) of the respondents affirmed that the remedies to the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State is the Redefinition of sizes of texts, images, graphic and tables etc, while the least percentage (7.5%) of the respondents stated that the remedies to the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State is the redesigning of the device to handle multimedia

file types. The results therefore mean that the greatest remedy to the challenges of mobile library services in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State is redefinition of sizes of texts, images, graphic and tables etc.

## **Conclusion**

Mobile library brings prosperity, progress. And development of any nation depends upon the nation's ability to acquire, produce, access, and use pertinent information. Mobile library services have to grow, and this requires greater collaboration between academics, industry, corporations, and government. Mobile library has the potential to eradicate illiteracy and liberate literacy in the rural areas in Akwa Ibom State. Mobile technology will assist both novice and experienced librarians in remaining relevant in a mobile society. The needs for mobile library in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State include: health information needs, constitution of legal matters, crime and safety purposes, transportation needs, policies and governmental negotiation. Also the study concludes that the various challenges facing mobile library service in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State are, limited memory of mobile devices, limitation of a small screen size, dependent and work for restricted range of devices, difficulty to select a display model, limitations in existing technologies, problem with pdf support on blackberry devices, problem with supporting audio and video.

## **Recommendations**

1. The government should make adequate funds available for the acquisition of information resources and the provision of quality mobile library services to the rural schools in Akwa Ibom State.
2. The government should make library services available to students through the use of the mobile library in rural schools in Akwa Ibom State.
3. The government should prioritize improving the infrastructure and resources in Akwa Ibom State's rural schools.

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