

INFS 431: LITERATURE AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

SESSION 9 – DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARY SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

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Session Overview

Libraries are described as repositories of knowledge providing all manner of materials to satisfy the educational, informational, recreational, and cultural and research needs of their clientele. Public libraries particularly strive to cater for the needs of the community in which they are established regardless of sex, race, religion, age, educational ability, social standing etc.

Services that are provided for the adults are replicated for children to cater for their level of readership. There is no single published historical study of how library services for children began. What is known is that public library service to children began over 100 years ago. Public libraries in the modern sense, as defined by UNESCO, dates back to 1850 when in the UK, an act of Parliament obliged local councils to levy tax for the provision of library services for the public.

Session Objectives

At the end of the session, you will be able to:

- Trace the development of library services for children
- Identify existing models of library provision for children
- Explain the importance of library services for children
- Describe the kind of services provided for children

Session Outline

The key topics to be covered in the session are:

- Topic 1: The Beginnings of Library Services for Children
- Topic Two: Importance of Providing Library Services for Children
- Topic Three: Traditional Services
- Topic Four: Current Service Provision

Reading List

1. Akanwa, P. C. (2013). Public library services to children in rural areas. *Library Philosophy & Practice*, 1-16. Retrieved from <http://www.ebscohost.com> (Accessed on September 1st, 2014).
2. Children's Libraries (2008). *Encyclopaedia of Children and Childhood in History and Society*. The Gale Group Inc.
3. Elkin, J., & Magaret, K. (Eds.). (2000). *A Place for Children: Public Libraries as a Major Force in Children's Reading*. London: Library Association Publishing.
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Topic One:

THE BEGINNINGS OF LIBRARY SERVICES FOR CHILDREN



Introduction

Statistics show that over 250 million children worldwide are failing to achieve basic literacy skills.

- Implications for world development and for peace in the world.
- Former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan:
 - “Literacy unlocks the door to learning throughout life, is essential to development and health, and opens the way for democratic participation and active citizenship.”
- That being the case, it is important for children
 - not just to be introduced to books, but
 - to be provided with the right ambiance for reading.

Introduction(Cont.)

Room to Read, a non-governmental organization(NGO) dedicated to ensuring literacy and gender equality in education particularly in developing countries

- points out that for children to
 - become independent readers,
 - be effective communicators and
 - lifelong learners,
- They need time to practise and exposure to a variety of texts.
- Age-appropriate reading materials available in libraries provide children
 - access to exciting reading materials and
 - a safe space to learn and play.

Origins of Children's Libraries

There is no single published historical study of how library services for children began.

- What is known is that public library service to children began over 100 years ago.
- Public libraries in the modern sense, as defined by UNESCO, dates back to 1850 when in the UK, an act of Parliament obliged local councils to levy tax for the provision of library services for the public.
- Long before 1850, the people of Peterborough in New Hampshire in the USA had
 - decided to use money that has been given them to build schools and other educational facilities for the establishment of free library services for the community.
 - However, it was not till 1848 that the state legislature gave the city of Boston in Massachusetts the mandate to levy tax to support a library for the public
 - the Boston Public Library was opened to the public for free in 1854.
- It may be assumed that library services to children started soon after the establishment of free public libraries.

Origins of Children's Libraries(Cont.)

Progressive social reform movements in the USA and the UK in the late 19th Century

- Inspired public librarians in those countries to establish children's services that emphasized
 - outreach and programming
 - the creation of special collections of books for young readers.
- The special collections and services are meant to complement collections and services in school libraries.
- School libraries themselves are established to support the school curriculum.
- Children's collections in public libraries attempt to meet educational needs however;
 - the main focus of public library service to children has always been on
 - promoting the joy of reading and
 - sustaining the emerging literacy skills of children.

Guiding Principles for Service to Children

In many countries in the world, definite statements have been made to guide the development of children's library service.

- USA children's librarians have developed what they call 'articles of faith'.
- These are :
 - Belief in the uniqueness of each child
 - Belief in the crucial importance of each child's personal selection of reading materials
 - Belief in the children's room as "an egalitarian republic of readers"
 - Belief in literature as a positive force for understanding between individuals and between and nations

Guiding Principles for Service to Children(Cont.)

- UK, the Library Association has guidelines for service to children.
- The guidelines identify four areas of child development in which libraries are of vital importance.
- These are:
 - Intellectual development
 - Language development
 - Social development
 - Educational development

Guiding Principles for Service to Children(Cont.)

- Japan, have a popular slogan
 - “Like lampposts in town, we need children’s libraries on every corner.”
- To guide the provision of library services in the country.

Models of Children's Libraries

There are varied models of service provision for children.

- In most countries, children's services are integrated into the public library system.
- However, other models exist.
 - In India some university libraries have children's sections.
 - In Ghana and Cote D'Ivoire children's services are integrated into the national public library service.
 - In Iran on the other hand, there is an extensive system of free-standing children's libraries.

Models of Children's Libraries(Cont.)

- France, Germany Japan, Jordan, and Russia have an integrated system of public libraries and free-standing children's libraries.
- Most notable children's libraries in the world are
 - the International Youth Library in Munich;
 - L'Heure Joyeuse in Paris and
 - the Library of the Children's Book Trust in New Delhi.
- In Ghana, library services to children began in 1948 with the establishment of the public library service in the Gold Coast by Cap 118 (Gold Coast Ordinance).

Topic Two:

IMPORTANCE OF PROVIDING LIBRARY SERVICES FOR CHILDREN



Introduction

Libraries are described as repositories of knowledge providing all manner of materials to satisfy

- the educational,
 - informational,
 - recreational,
 - cultural and
 - research needs of their clientele.
- Public libraries particularly strive to cater for the need of the community in which they are established regardless of
 - sex,
 - race,
 - religion,
 - age,
 - educational ability,
 - social standing etc.
 - Services that are provided for the adults are replicated for children to cater for their level of readership.

- In the year 2001, a lecturer in literature and services for children, Virginia Walker published the book, **Children and Libraries: Getting it Right.**
- In the book she outlined what she called the Five Laws of children's librarianship thus:
 - **First Law** – Libraries serve the reading interest and information needs of all children directly and through services of children and other adult who are involved in the lives of children.
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 - **Second Law** – Children's librarians provide the right book or the right information for the right child right at the time and in the right place.

- **Third Law** – Children’s librarians are advocates for children’s access to books, information, information technology and ideas.
- **Fourth Law** – Children’s librarians promote children’s literacy in all media.
- **Fifth Law** – Children’s librarians honour their traditions and create the future.
- The five laws underscore the provision of library services for children.

Factors Leading to the Establishment of Library Services for Children

- It is recognised that no matter how much parents strive, they cannot satisfy the reading needs of their children from their own resources.
- It is therefore necessary for an institution that can provide children's reading needs.
- A number of factors led to the establishment of library services for children.
- These include:

The need to sustain children's interest in reading.

- Children who read tend to become avid readers.
- There is the need therefore for a constant and regular supply of reading materials keep them going.
- Any break in the provision of materials is likely to create a loss of interest in reading by children.
- Again, if children finish reading a set or collection of books and there are no new ones to replace what they have read it will affect their interest in reading.

The need to provide variety in the reading material for children.

- Children need variety in the types of materials that they read.
- Variety helps to sustain their interest in reading. Additionally, variety in the materials they read stimulates their imagination better.
- Besides, as they move from one stage of growth to another their taste and purpose for reading change
- These must be matched by different types of reading materials to challenge their imagination.

The need for professionally trained people to select appropriate reading material for children.

- Trained people know how to evaluate reading materials in terms of
 - their contents,
 - intended level of readership, and
 - physical suitability for children.
- Children's minds are easily impressed so a lot of care must go into what is given to them to read.

The need to guide children in their own selection of reading material.

- Children will definitely want to read materials of their own choice.
- They must be encouraged to do so but under guidance.
- If children are left alone to choose what they want to read, they may end up reading materials that at best may not be edifying for them or at worst may corrupt their young minds.

The need to facilitate the transition of children from children's library through school library use to adult library use.

- In order for children to derive maximum benefit from their interaction with books they need to be exposed to books at an early age.
- Once they have been introduced to books, children will continue to use books from the kindergarten level to the university level and beyond.
- Hence libraries ease the transition between the various stages of use of books.

The need to encourage and sustain lifelong learning.

- Lifelong learning is now a contemporary issue worldwide and libraries are at the forefront of the drive for all citizens to develop and become lifelong learners in this information-driven world.
- Failure to become a lifelong learner will mean that an individual may find it difficult to function well in a world that is changing so fast that what held true yesterday may no longer be valid today.
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Topic Three:

TRADITIONAL SERVICES



Introduction

Traditional services that public libraries worldwide provide for their clientele include circulation services which involves patrons taking out on loan, books for a period of time

Reference and Information Service which involves the provision of seating accommodation for the users for the purpose of study and research.

There is also extension activities designed to provide variety in library use and to sustain interest in the library. Such services are duplicated for children also.

Accommodation, Furniture & Materials

Library services for children involve providing a separate section for children in public libraries.

- In providing services much thought is given to the physical accommodation. The library for children must be spacious in order to accommodate extension activities without interrupting normal library activities.
- Usually, a summer hut is built outside of the main building to cater for such activities
 - as story hour,
 - film shows,
 - puppet theatre,
 - drama and cultural activities etc.
- There must be provision for listening and viewing facilities.
- There must be adequate lighting and free flow of air to ensure natural ventilation.

Accommodation, Furniture & Materials(Cont.)

Furniture provided must be varied and comfortable.

- It is important not to replicate the classroom furniture and atmosphere, in the library
- That way children can relax and browse the shelves at their own pace.

Materials will include

- books of all kinds to satisfy the various levels of readership from Pre-school through lower primary to the young adult;
- audio-visuals of all kinds including games that are popular with children these days
- periodicals including newspapers, magazines as well as journals.

Services

Just as circulation or lending and reference services are provided for adults, children also receive these services.

- Lending services consist of children borrowing a specific number of books,
 - Depending on the library's policy, this may be for a period of two weeks.
 - They are free to return the books and borrow new ones before the loan period is up.
 - Thus very good readers may soon exhaust the library's book stock in no time if there is no regular addition of new materials to the stock.
 - Slow readers are also allowed to renew books they have borrowed for another period of two weeks provided the book is not sought by another reader.
- Reference service consists of a section reserved for those who wish to study, or research for information to do class assignments.
 - Study carrels in this case are provided for such purposes.

Extension Services

Extension activities are also offered in service provision for children.

- Extension activities are considered to be more important among the services provided for children.
- This is so because, it is through extension activities that children's interest in books is generated and sustained.
- Extension activities for children are varied and include:
 - publications
 - exhibitions and displays
 - children's book week
 - talks and lectures
 - film shows
 - play reading, productions and puppetry
 - story hours
 - miscellaneous activities

Extension Services (Cont.)

PUBLICATIONS:

- With this, children are encouraged to write their own stories, poems and plays which are published in their own magazines.

EXHIBITIONS AND DISPLAYS: These are mounted taking into consideration the interests of children.

- Such activities are undertaken to help children develop healthy interests and to learn about the kinds of materials that the library has on the various interest areas of children.
 - Examples of children's interest areas upon which exhibitions or displays may be mounted are
 - philately (stamp collection);
 - nature studies like birds, flowers, butterflies etc;
 - different types of ships - from Noah's Ark to aircraft carriers;
 - aeroplanes – from the monoplane to the supersonic Concorde etc.

CHILDREN'S BOOK WEEK: This is aimed at presenting books to children in a dramatic fashion. During such activity authors of children's books are invited to give a talk about their books.

Extension Services(Cont.)

TALKS AND LECTURES: These are organised to educate children on the importance of books.

- Topics also include contemporary issues affecting the lives of children.

FILM SHOW: In the beginning it was thought that film shows were counter productive to the acquisition of a reading habit because children will form a film habit rather than the reading habit.

- However, it has been proven that films can be used to generate children's interest in reading. For example, parents can buy or borrow the book of a film children have watched.
- They will be better disposed towards the reading because they will derive more enjoyment from the book than the film.
- Films only provide a truncated version of the plot.
- When children watch a film about oil spills and the danger it poses to the environment, books on endangered species can be provided for them to learn about the environment.
- Again, films can be used for educational purposes.
- There are documentary films on selected topics, general interest films and feature films.

PLAY READING, PRODUCTION AND PUPPERTRY: Children can be taught how to produce films.

- Playwrights can read out their plays to children.

Extension Services(Cont.)

STORY HOUR: This consists of a librarian reading a book from the library collection to the children and asking children to recollect some of the parts of the story that was told and identify lessons that may be learnt from the story,

- By so doing children will learn how to pick from the collections to read.
 - This is the most popular extension activity for children of all ages.

MISCELLANEOUS ACTIVITIES:

These include

- Picture book time in which children are given paper and crayons to draw their own parents or siblings or objects of their own choice and interest.
- Talk to parents about library use and encouraging reading at home.
 - This helps parents to create the necessary conditions for effective reading by children.
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- Encouraging children to do their home work in the library.
 - Teachers are encouraged to provide homework that will require children to go to the library to look for information.

Extension Services (Cont.)

- Excursions to various places of interest may be organised for children.
 - These are done during the vacation period.
 - After the excursion children are tasked to write stories about their experiences during the trip.
- Quizzes and spelling competitions are organized in the libraries for children.
 - Prizes are awarded to winners of the competitions.
 - These may be organized on individual basis or children may be encouraged to form clubs in the library and compete among the clubs.
- Children's talents may be developed through craftwork in the library.
 - This involves inviting craftsmen like weavers, sculptors etc to teach children such crafts.
- School visitation by library personal also forms part of miscellaneous activities.

Topic Four:

CURRENT SERVICE PROVISION



New Developments

Today, library services for children have developed so much

- In the advance countries there are journals and newsletters devoted exclusively to reporting activities on services for children.
- Examples of journals include
 - **Journal of Youth Services in libraries;**
 - **Children and libraries** etc.

Promotion of Services

Many organisations and institutions as well as associations promote children's literature and reading by children.

- For example,
- the Children's Book Awards founded in 1980 by the Federation of Children's Book Groups in USA.
 - The award is given to writers of fiction for children under 14 years of age.
- There is the Children's Book Circle which is an informal group of children's book editors formed in 1962.
- Its purpose is to exchange ideas on the communication and publication of children's books.
- They also have instituted an annual award for distinguished services in children's book promotion in the past year.
- It is called the Eleanor Farjean Award.
- Eleanor Farjean was a prolific children's writer. She died in 1965.

Promotion of Services(Cont.)

- The Children's Book Council, a non-profit organisation
- Dedicated to enhancing reading of children's books.
- The Council started the first National Children's Book Day in 1945.
- The Council serves also as the US section of International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY).
- The Accra Central Children's Library serves as the Ghana section.

- In the UK, a National Year of Reading has been instituted.
- There is also a National Literacy Project.
- In 2000, a study was commissioned to collate ideas and design library services for children in the next millennium.
- The research looked at services that were being carried out currently and plans that have been made for the future.
- It also focussed on the funding for traditional services as well as new services in line with information communication technology and advanced electronic navigation skills.

Promotion of Services(Cont.)

- In this era of information and communication technology, public libraries have websites at which activities for children in the libraries are posted.
- In the USA for example activities like
 - Baby Time,
 - Toddler Time,
 - Story Time,
 - Craft Time and
 - Family Time
- provided online for parents or caregivers and their children ([Higgins, 2007](#)).

References

