THE RELEVANCE AND ADEQUACY OF THE ASHANTI REGIONAL LIBRARY, KUMASI, GHANA: AN APPRAISAL BY USERS

Kwaku Agyen-Gyasi
KNUST, kagyasi@yahoo.com

Hagar Atta-Oteng
KNUST, hagatta2010@yahoo.com

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac
Part of the Library and Information Science Commons
THE RELEVANCE AND ADEQUACY OF THE ASHANTI REGIONAL LIBRARY, KUMASI, GHANA: AN APPRAISAL BY USERS

By

*Kwaku Agyen-Gyasi and **Hagar Atta-Obeng

Senior Assistant Librarian Assistant Librarian

Library, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana

Email: *kagyasi@yahoo.com; **hagatta2010@yahoo.com

Abstract

Public libraries provide resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of users for education, information and personal development. The provision of quality information will always have a positive impact on the patronage of these libraries. This is because the users’ ability to access relevant information and make effective use of them to a large extent determines their willingness to visit the library in question. This paper assesses the relevance and adequacy of public library resources at the Ashanti Regional Library in Kumasi. Data for the study were obtained through the use of structured questionnaire. A total of two hundred and fifty (250) questionnaires were administered between October and December, 2012 using both random and stratified sampling methods. The stratified sampling focused on both the registered users and regular users but who are not registered. The objective was to get users’ impressions about the available library resources. In all a total of 185 responses representing 74% response rate were received. Information obtained was supplemented by secondary sources such as books, journals articles and the Internet. It was observed that majority of the users of the library were students between the ages of 19 and 23 years and pursuing various programmes in secondary and tertiary institutions in Kumasi who use the library to prepare for their examinations. The users were particularly dissatisfied with the stock of books, seating capacity, information and communication technology (ICT) facilities etc. They were however satisfied with the attitude of staff and the opening hours of the library. The challenges facing the library in its quest to providing adequate and relevant information resources to its users have been highlighted and appropriate recommendations made to ensure quality service delivery.

Keywords: library resources, library facilities, information sources, public libraries, user satisfaction

Introduction

Libraries whether academic, special or public exist for their use. This is because these libraries provide users with the relevant sources of information that meet their needs. Adequate and relevant sources of information in all spheres of life are needed for the development of every nation as its availability or non-availability can dictate the wealth or poverty of the nation in question. The provision of quality information resources available at any material moment will
invariably have positive impact on the patronage of the library. Any good library well-equipped with books and periodicals in all subjects is essential for the advancement of information for users to carry out relevant research and study that will propel the nation for better economic growth. The up-to-dateness of documents available in a particular library, the quantities available and their quality could influence their use. On the contrary, if the quality of information resources provided by the library leaves much to be desired, the patronage would be affected. Libraries especially public libraries assist in the provision of relevant information to the different strata of the society and thus help in achieving their developmental goals.

In order to satisfy the diverse information needs and interest of the users in the communities in which the library is located, the public library’s collection must be adequate in terms of quantity, quality and currency. Public library materials are considered as relevant if it meets the needs of its users or increases the likelihood of accomplishing the goal for which it was set up to do. This is because customer service has always been a leading mission of any public library and if the management of these libraries expect better patronage from their patrons, then they are duty bound to provide materials that suit the needs of these users both qualitatively and quantitatively. Undoubtedly, if any public library wants to provide good service for its users, a rich collection is clearly the most important attraction, though not the only one.

Public libraries play a vital role in the socio-economic development of any country. They contribute to better education, healthy politics and growth in agriculture, business and industrial sectors. Public libraries promote literacy and numeracy by making reading materials available to all, thereby optimizing human development through education. They allow users to take books and other materials off the premises temporarily and also have non-circulating reference collections and provide computer and Internet access to patrons. Public libraries give children access to a
wider range of books more than could be provided by a school library and plays a significant part in equalizing opportunities for learning resources to be available to all irrespective of the economic status of the parents or guardians. They give the young users access to information resources after school hours and arouse their interest to read outside of the school curriculum. Also, they provide free services such as preschool story times to encourage early literacy, quiet study and work areas for students and professionals.

Unfortunately, public libraries in Ghana have been neglected for far too long and have not been placed on the government priority list as an alternative lifelong educational resource. Although Ghana is not a big country, bureaucracy and lack of understanding of the Public Library’s role has pushed them to the periphery. Not only do they lack spacious library buildings but in some cases have to share their premises with other institutions. Other challenges facing public libraries in Ghana include: insufficient funding, shortage of professional staff, low reading habits among the citizenry and inadequate computers and poor internet connectivity. Also, the stocks of reading materials in these libraries are not only small, but are outdated and irrelevant to the needs of their users and thus require weeding. The ultimate consequence is wide-spread illiteracy which is the greatest handicap for development. In the view of Ghosh (2005), “public libraries in developing countries suffer from a variety of infrastructure, manpower and monetary constraints that could lure in illiterate and semi-illiterate folk, as well as being low in the priorities of policy makers and implementing bodies”.

By a public library, we mean an organisation established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional or national government or through some other forms of community organisation. There are five fundamental characteristics shared by public libraries. They are generally supported by taxes (usually local, though any level of government can and may
contribute); governed by a board to serve the public interest; opened to all and every community
member, entirely voluntary in that no one is ever forced to use the services provided; and they
provide basic services without charge (Wikipedia, 2013).

Ghana is an emerging economy with a total population of about 24 million. The population
of Ghana is growing at a rate of about 3.4%. The growth in population is accompanied by its own
challenges: literacy, education, economic empowerment and environmental degradation. All
sectors of the Ghanaian economy including public libraries have indispensable role to play in
addressing these challenges. According to Ghosh (2004) “there should be one public library for
every 3,000 people”. This means with the current population of 24 million people, Ghana needs
about 8000 public libraries. Although it is the vision of the Ghana Library Authority to provide
access to modern public libraries within easy reach of not more than eight kilometres, this is yet
to materialise owing to financial constraints.

The public libraries in Ghana have served as centres for educational support through the
 provision of quality reading materials such as books, periodicals and other non-book materials and
also supplemented school curriculum. They do so by collecting, organising and disseminating
information to their users both young and adults. In spite of the success chalked by these libraries,
they are finding it difficult to attract the target clientele (i.e. the youth) to patronize their facilities.
The reason is that most of the facilities that the Authority should have at its disposal in these public
libraries are lacking and since most youth are now into entertainment and wants to move with the
times, they will always want to entertain themselves in every environment they find themselves
through the use of the internet. The purpose of this paper is to provide an empirical description of
the relevance and adequacy of resources at the Ashanti Regional Library in Kumasi and to discuss
the effectiveness of the system by way of service provision to its users.
Public Library System in Ghana

The Public Library Service in Ghana has a chequered history. It began in January 1950 with the enactment of the Gold Coast Library Board Ordinance (Cap118) although it was passed by the Legislative Council in December in 1949. According to Bukenya (2009), it was one of the first Library Acts which served as a model to many African countries. The Gold Coast Library Board (GCLB) was later revised by a Ghana Library Board Act 1970, Act 327 as the only institution mandated by law to establish, equip, manage and maintain public libraries in the country. Currently, Public Library Management in Ghana comes under the auspices of the Ghana Library Authority (GLA), formerly Ghana Library Board (GLB) and the Ministry of Education. It is a unitary system financed in the main by the government through the Ghana Education Service and managed by the Ghana Library Authority. The former is responsible for the supervision and funding of these libraries on behalf of the government while the latter is responsible for capacity building and the setting up and management of public libraries, at regional, district and community levels. The GLA consists of the headquarters which combines central administration with bulk book purchase and processing of documents for all the member libraries.

The Authority has a reference and lending sections located in all the ten (10) regional capitals and some districts of Ghana. The lending section allows its patrons to borrow books and take them away to read at home, read newspapers, periodicals, as well as use internet services for a small fee. The reference section on the other hand is designed mainly to serve the academia or people who are researching or looking for rare books on certain topical issues (Krampah, 2012).

The Ghana Library Board opened the Ashanti Regional Library in Kumasi in 1951 and its permanent Library building put up in 1954. It is one of the ten (10) regional libraries out of the total of sixty-one (61) public or community libraries currently in Ghana and the first regional
library to be built in the country by the Ghana Library Board, (Evans, 1964: 66). The Ashanti Regional Library popularly referred to as the Ashanti Library is located within the premises of the Centre for National Culture (formerly the Ghana National Cultural Centre) in Kumasi a few metres away from the main lorry station “Kejetia” (Agyen-Gyasi and Atta-Obeng, 2010).

**Objectives of the Study**

The objective of the study is to ascertain users’ reaction about the relevance and adequacy of the resources and facilities available at the Ashanti Regional Library in Kumasi, Ghana and how far it has impacted on the services rendered to these users.

The specific objectives of the study are:

(i) To find out the type of people who use the library -i.e. whether students or workers as well as their age groups.

(ii) To assess the status of users of the library and how often they use the facilities and resources in the library.

(iii) To seek users’ perception about the facilities and resources available in the library.

(iv) To ascertain the attitude of staff towards users of the library.

(v) To find out how far the users are making use of the ICT facilities at the library.

(vi) To identify challenge(s) users face in using the library; and

(vii) To offer solutions to the challenges identified in order to enable the library better serve its users.

**Literature Review**

The role and mandate of the public library in any nation is to provide people of all ages with equitable access to relevant and adequate information resources and services. They do so by making information accessible to all users regardless of their economic, social or racial status.
Relevance of resources and facilities particularly in public library is therefore central in the design and evaluation of information retrieval (IR) systems and techniques. A lot of research has thus been done on the adequacy and relevance of public library resources in the world in general and Africa in particular.

Goffman (1964) defined the concept of relevance of information resources as a measure of information conveyed by a document relative to a query. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary (2005) the term relevance means the ability (as of an information retrieval system) to retrieve material that satisfies the needs of the user while adequacy is defined as having a significant and demonstrable bearing on the matter at hand.

According to Park (1993), the concept of relevance has played a major role in information retrieval (IR) research since the 1950s. This is because the objective of any IR system is to provide users with access to "relevant" documents irrespective of the number of users. Marcum and Stone (1991) stated that librarians in public libraries at the turn of the century helped the large influx of immigrants acclimatize to their new life in the United States by providing them with relevant information sources regarding the weather and the socio-cultural life of the people.

In the view of Weibel (1992), public libraries provide access to relevant information about culture, society, economy and history with the librarian serving as a “reader advisor” by suggesting and interpreting resources in the library. He further stated that public libraries should strive to offer adequate learning facilities and materials and also promote public discussion through the resources in their collections.

Schamber (1994) argued that much of the research on relevance in information retrieval focuses on what users need from information retrieval systems. According to him, users generally
judged documents as relevant if they meet their information needs in some way whilst those documents that fail to meet their needs are judged as not relevant.

Khan (1990) highlighted the features of public libraries in developing countries which included among others: an urban concentration with less effort to penetrate into the rural areas; concentration on print media; push towards quantitative growth in the number of buildings or size of collections, little or no concern for the quality or relevance of the holdings; an orientation toward recreational reading rather than the practical research interest of client population; the focus on housekeeping operations rather than engaging in outreach programme to the communities and little contact with the social needs of the environment. This buttresses the fact that public libraries in developing countries including Ghana lack relevant materials that meet the needs of their users or cover all spheres of life.

Neuman (2000) asserts that public libraries are well-positioned to expose children to great quantities of print and meaningful language opportunities during the crucial pre-school and elementary school years. This is because research shows that children need exposure to a wide variety of high-quality books of various topics, genres, and perspective in order to acquire literacy skills. He argues further that children need adequate and relevant books that reflect the diverse and multicultural nature of their society (i.e. books in which they can see themselves and others like them).

Grosso (2008) opined that the public library’s primary role is to select, maintain and provide access to relevant and balanced information resources. He further stated that owing to technological developments, libraries were moving away from holdings to access strategies which implied the libraries needed to disseminate widely information on their collection policies to reflect the changing dynamics.
Antwi (1989) reviewed the adequacy and relevance of Bauchi State Library and stated that for users to maximize the use of a library, it should have adequate resources which should include both print and electronic materials. Also, the collection should be relevant to the needs of the community. In his view, the nature and the extent of underdevelopment in the educational facilities in the Bauchi State had affected the development of all types of libraries. Antwi (1989) further stated that the Bauchi State was a “listening” and “seeing” society because most people could neither read nor write and as such more emphasis should be placed on the acquisition of relevant non-print materials such as films, photographs, posters and cassettes in the library to ensure patronage from users.

According to Banjo (1993), the provision of adequate public libraries services in Nigeria was hampered by the low level of public awareness of the value of libraries and the inability of librarians to promote the services provided. He therefore suggested a coalition between the government, the local community, the public sector, voluntary organisations, donor agencies and the Nigerian Library Association to work together to define strategies to develop public library services in the country to ensure the provision of adequate and relevant library resources and quality delivery of services to users.

Nwokocha (1993) evaluated the utilization pattern of adult public library users in Owerri and Umuahia Public Libraries in Nigeria and concluded that majority of the library users were school children preparing for their examinations and who visited the libraries with their own materials. These challenges according to him had affected the habit of borrowing books from the libraries by the users and consequently deprived them from registering as users.

Olden, (1985) argued that public libraries in Nigeria were used by a very small percentage of the country’s population because of the irrelevance of services offered to the illiterate
population. He asserted that those who were literate restricted their library usage to educational purposes and thus stopped using the library’s facilities as soon as they achieved their aims. He further outlined the lack of professional leadership and government support given to public libraries in Nigeria as well as the absence of the appropriate legislation and the difficulty of extending the services to outside urban centres.

Fourie and Kruger (1994) undertook a survey on public library usage of 500 pupils in Pretoria, South Africa and concluded that these users used the library with dual objectives: for curricular and extra-curricular activities. The survey further showed a significant relationship between the use of the library and age, gender, school standard and home language. They argued that the public library needs to take into account the socio-economic and cultural circumstance of the school pupils when planning for the collections and services for the youth population.

Mcharazo (2000) in his survey found out that many students do not use the collections in public libraries in Tanzania because these libraries lacked most of the essential readings materials and that those materials available were just not enough for all the students who visited these libraries. In his view, these students felt as if they were scrambling for just a few copies some of which were out-of-date. Mcharazo (2000) therefore concluded that the elementary level of the materials, irrelevance, and their outdatedness were the most important reasons for the failure of distance learners to use the public libraries in Tanzania.

Ugboma (1998) surveyed the Ozoro and Oleh Branch Libraries of the Delta State in Nigeria and found that the libraries’ facilities, equipment, resources and personnel were grossly inadequate. He therefore suggested that public libraries should look for sources of additional funding to improve upon the situation especially in staff recruitment and training.
In the view of Clare (2008) for public libraries to be relevant in this age of technology they need a market oriented approach which calls for an adjustment of the reading materials and the environment so that they could be more inviting to the users. This in her view, required proactive public librarians who could convince the local government authorities that building the economy did not just involve earning money but also involved building the capacities of human beings, shaping communities, encouraging learning and skills development.

According to Alokun (2003), the core mission of public libraries is information, literacy and public education but they could also serve as a valued asset in meeting a community’s strategic goals through the provision of a variety of information resources and services which aim at meeting the varied information needs of the communities they serve. These needs in his view cover such areas of life namely political, economic, social and cultural.

Opera (2008) identified inadequate collections and financial support from the authorities charged with the responsibility of setting up these libraries, accommodation, demoralized and inadequate workforce and poor perception of public library and librarians as the major challenges militating against the public libraries in Nigeria.

According to Udeze (2009), in Nigeria, people, mostly students, visit the public libraries to read for their examination and nothing more because these libraries apart from providing a noiseless atmosphere are not providing the kind of information that people need to solve their individual problems.

Atinmo (2000) opined that just as it is impossible for mortals to survive without good nutritious foods, it is equally tragic not to have adequate information in the knowledge economy. To him, there exists a close relationship between the underdevelopment and the high levels of illiteracy associated with most African countries and thus indicated that if Africa wants to solve
its problem of underdevelopment, then they should begin to stock their public libraries with relevant and adequate information resources in all spheres of life.

John-Okeke and Owoeye (2011) argued that, public library services in the Lagos State are grossly inadequate and bedeviled with poor funding, inadequate staffing and non commitment on the part of the governments (state and local), librarians and the community at large. They further argued that for public libraries to be relevant in this age of technology they must be ready to scan their immediate environment in order to ascertain the kind of information needed by people they are serving.

Perspectives in Ghana have been given by Alemna (1996) who assessed the state of the public library services in Ghana and concluded that they were ineffective and recommended an improvement in services such as the cultural preservation and distance learning. Reviewing the developments of libraries in Ghana including public libraries, Alemna (1997), concluded that the growth of libraries in the country were fragmented and uncoordinated owing to the absence of a National Library in Ghana as a centre for library co-operation and coordination the country.

Boateng (1993) studied the use of children’s section of the Ashanti Regional Library and found that most of the pupils were reluctant to patronise the public library because of inadequate resources such as books and audio-visual aids. This in his view had impacted negatively on proportion of the population of children of school going age in Kumasi who have registered as users of Ashanti Regional Library because of inadequate and poor quality reading books in the library.

Tackie (1995) examined the provision of adult education in Ghana especially with regard to the role of the public library and the cooperation that exists between the public library system
the major agencies providing adult education in Ghana. He found that such form of cooperation was lacking owing to inadequate number of public libraries, lack of relevant books and insufficient quantities as well as the outdateness of the few stock available.

Agyen-Gyasi (1996) studied the facilities at the Ejura Public Library in Ghana and concluded that the Library lacked relevant and adequate resources (both material and human) necessary to provide the needed information to its users.

Krampah (2012) opined that in spite of the significant role that public libraries play in the educational system in Ghana, they are increasingly finding it difficult to attract users to patronize their facilities because most of the resources and facilities that the Ghana Library Authority should have at its disposal are lacking. She attributed this problem to “chronic under-funding that the GLA has faced over the years”. In her view, “the allocation of funds to the GLA is so scanty that not much could be done by way of new infrastructure as well as maintenance and repairs of existing structures and equipment”. Krampah (2012) further stated that the Authority also loses staff frequently because of poor remuneration and general poor conditions of services thereby affecting the quality of services that users are expecting to be delivered to them.

Based on the above literature, it can be concluded that public libraries provide resources for knowledge acquisition, recreation, personal development and inter-personal relationships for all categories of users. The relevance and adequacy of these resources determine the extent to which users would patronize such libraries. Unfortunately, public libraries in most African countries lack relevant materials mainly because they are poorly funded. Majority of their collections are inadequate and largely outdated, are manned by few qualified staff because of low
remuneration and boast of few computers that have Internet connectivity which consequently
affect their patronage by users.

Methodology

The survey method was used for the study. A structured questionnaire was used to collect
quantitative data about the users and their use of the facilities. The questionnaire consisted of the
following items: demographic characteristics of the library users such as gender, age, marital
status, educational attainment and occupation; status of users; purpose and frequency of library
visits; users’ opinion on library collections, library services and facilities; purpose and use of
information and communication technology (ICT) and constraints faced by users in using library
services. As Kumasi is a popular educational, administrative and tourist destination, it was thought
essential to examine the possible influence of visitors and of seasonal variation on the use of the
resources. Therefore, the questionnaires were handed out to the users between the period of
October and December of 2012.

The population surveyed were the users of the Ashanti Regional Library who used the
library during the period of the survey. The size of the population was two hundred and fifty (250).
Both random and stratified sampling methods were used to make sure that both the casual and
regular users were covered. The random sampling was used for those who came to the library
within the stated period while the stratified sampling focused on both the registered users and
regular users but who are not registered. Such users were identified with the help of the members
of staff of the library.

A high response rate of 74% (185) out of a total of 250 users was achieved, which may be
attributed to the fact that most of the questionnaire were handed personally to users by the Research
Assistants. The sample represents those using the library’s resources during the survey period. The
information obtained was supplemented by secondary sources such as books, journals articles and the Internet. Relevant data extracted from both the questionnaires and the interviews were illustrated in the form of tables and graphs.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

Gender characteristics of the users

The gender characteristics of the users show that there was an imbalance in the gender profile of the users accessed by the survey. One hundred and twenty-one respondents’ representing 65.4% were males whilst 34.6% (64) were females. The conclusion that could be drawn is that the users of the Ashanti Regional Library are predominantly males.

Age characteristics of Library users

Data on the age characteristics of users (Figure 1) show a striking concentration within a few categories. The absolute majority of users, 98 out of the total of 185 (53%) were between the ages of 19 and 25 years. This is followed by the 26-33 year group (30.8%) while 42 years and above represented the least proportion of 3.7%. This means that 88.1% of the users of the Ashanti Regional Library in Kumasi are between 15 and 33 years. From the above analysis, it is concluded that a predominantly high proportion of young men and women use the resources of the Ashanti Regional Library.
Educational Background

Figure 2 shows the educational profile of the respondents. It is observed that 74.6% of the users of the library are students of tertiary institutions, many of whom might have been continuing their studies having obtained the West African School Certificate of Education (WASCE), Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) or diploma. There was a very low presence (1.1%) of persons below the Secondary school level.

It is concluded from Figure 2 that the high concentration of users of the Ashanti Regional Library is students in the tertiary institutions. This may be attributed to the non-residential status of students in tertiary institutions in Ghana in general and Kumasi in particular who use the library for their private studies during examination periods. Public Libraries thus provide essential places for students or users who utilise available textbooks and quiet place to study. According to Wanasundera (2008), “the provision of public libraries as places for reading and study rooms help users especially those whose housing conditions are substandard”.
Occupational Characteristics of Users

The occupational distribution of respondents of the library again shows that students mostly use the resources of the Ashanti Library. From Figure 3, it is observed that slightly more than half (53%) of the respondents are students. However, there is a marginal difference between the public and civil servants who use the library. Whilst the public servants constitute 21.6%, civil servants formed 21.1%. A subsidiary question about the respondents’ occupational background reveals that majority of the public servants are mostly teachers and nurses. On the other hand, a greater proportion of the civil servants are workers in the Ministry who are embarking on further studies on sandwich and distance learning basis.
Status of student respondents and type of Institutions

When respondents were further asked to indicate whether they were full time or part time students and the type of institution they attend, 32 out of 98 representing 32.7% responded that they attend University; 24 (24.5%) indicated the Polytechnic, and 17 (17.3%) said they attend Senior High School respectively while the rest made up of 25.5% were from the School of Journalism, Nursing and Teacher Training Colleges.

Frequency of the Use of the Library

How often people visit the public library can signify how important they attach to the use of the library. A remarkably large number of the respondents, 30.8%, claimed that they visit the public library every day, 29.2% indicated that they visit the library once a week. On the other hand, 28.6% indicated that they use it at least once in three months and 4.9% claimed that they use the library occasionally (Figure 4). This indicates that visits are a regular part of the library users’ routines and therefore must be a significant part of their spare time. Thus from Figure 4, it could
be concluded that a large number of regular patrons who see the public library as an important feature in their lives, regularly uses it.

**Reasons for using the Library**

When asked about the reasons for using the library, users gave a variety of reasons. One hundred and nine (58.9%) respondents indicated that they use the library to prepare for their examinations, 21.1% for research purposes while 8.1% answered that they use the library for reference purposes. Four users made up of 2 (1.1%) users each responded that they use the library to borrow books and to read newspapers or magazines respectively (Figure 5).

Thus, it can be concluded that majority of the users at the Ashanti Library use the library because it offers a quite environment for studies which enables them prepare for their
Status of the Users and whether or not Users Borrow Books from the Library

Every public library has defined group of users or patrons whom they serve and it is upon these users that decisions about the library are taken and implemented. This is because a well used public library will make a significant contribution to the vitality of the society as an important learning/social centre and meeting place. The responses received from the survey revealed that majority of the respondents (83.2%) are not registered users of the library while a disappointingly 6.8% out of the population are registered users.

When the respondents were further asked to indicate whether they borrow books from the library, 83.2% of them replied in the negative while 6.8% replied in the affirmative. It could be concluded that majority of the users at the Ashanti Library in Kumasi do not borrow books from the library.
Reasons for not Borrowing Book in the Library

Users gave a variety of reasons as to why they do not borrow books from the library. Seventy-six respondents representing 40.9\%, stated that they use the library for private studies, 26\% indicated that they cannot find quality books, 10.4\% responded that the books are old, 9.7\% responded that the books are inadequate while 5.8\% indicated that they come to the library only to read newspapers but not to borrow books. It is observed from Figure 6 below that about 93\% of the respondents do not borrow books from the Ashanti Library but rather use it for leisure reading and as a place for their private studies.

The reason is not far fetched. The nature of the existing stock shows many old books which are outdated, irrelevant and grossly inadequate to these users and thus not meeting their information needs. They therefore prefer to come to the library with their own books and reading materials.
Furthermore, the stock of books in the library is not keeping pace with the exponential growth in information materials that are published day-in and day-out because of inadequate budgetary allocation which could be a big disincentive to users who patronize the library. What has accounted for this poor state of the book stock is that the GLA purchases just a handful of books which are shared among the Regional and District Libraries. According to Gill et. al. (2001), "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". Regrettably, the GLA has failed to fulfil this responsibility that has been entrusted upon it.

Other Libraries used by Respondents apart from the Ashanti Regional Library

When asked about the other libraries in Kumasi used by respondents apart from the Ashanti Regional Library, 25.4% of the respondents indicated that they use the Ashanti New Town Library, 20% indicated KNUST Library, 17.8% stated the Kumasi Polytechnic Library and 10.8% indicated that they use the Nursing Training College Library. Four respondents (2%) stated that they use other libraries namely the College of Management, Ghana Health Service and the Teacher Training Colleges respectively, while 31 (16.8%) did not indicate their response (Figure 7).

It could be inferred from the above analysis, that majority of the users prefer to use the Ashanti New Town, KNUST, and the Kumasi Polytechnic Libraries in addition to the Ashanti Library.
Opening Hours

When respondents were asked to indicate whether or not the opening hours are suitable to users, 68.7% answered in the affirmative, 16.2% in the negative whilst 15.1% of the respondents were indifferent. It is thus concluded that users of the Ashanti Library are satisfied with the opening hours of the library.

Users Impressions about the Attitude of Staff and Service rendered by the Library

On users’ impression about the services rendered by the Ashanti Library, 66% made up of 33% each responded that it was good and satisfactory respectively. Twenty-two percent stated that it was very good while 2.2% expressed that the services offered by the library to its users is poor. It could therefore be concluded that majority of the users in the library are satisfied with the services by the library.
On users’ assessment on the attitude of staff towards them, 35.1% rated them as good, 28.6% satisfactory, 22.7% very good, 8.1% excellent while only 3.8% rated them as poor. Thus it can be said that the attitude of staff at the Ashanti Regional Library in Kumasi towards users is generally very good.

Assessment of the Lighting and Ventilation in the Library

Lighting and ventilation are two important variables that promote a congenial environment for reading in any library. Users were therefore asked to indicate whether the lighting and ventilation were conducive for reading. About 76.8% of the users answered in the affirmative while 13.5% answered in the negative. However, 8.1% stated somehow, while 1.6% did not indicate any response. It could be concluded from Figure 9 below that as many users of the Ashanti Library are satisfied with the lighting and ventilation situation in the library.
Users’ impression about the shelving arrangements

Users’ impression about the shelving arrangements of books in the library is analyzed in Figure 10 below.

From the Figure, it is observed that 73% of the users of Ashanti Library described the books in the library as well arranged, 8% described the arrangement as haphazard, 7% indicated that there is room for improvement while 5.4% stated that the books are not properly arranged. It is
concluded that the majority of the users are satisfied with the arrangement of books in the library.

**Users’ Assessment of Furniture Situation in the Library**

The Ashanti Library has a total seating capacity of 140. Of this number, 100 representing 71.4% are in the Reference Department while the remaining 40 or 28.6% are in the Children’s Department. The Lending Department of the Library has some few seats at the end of the room for internet facility.

The questionnaire sought to find out the users’ impression about the furniture situation of the library. Sixty-eight respondents representing 36.8% rated the furniture as inadequate, 12.4% stated that it is adequate, 21.6% indicated that the tables and chairs are not up to standard, while 6.5% answered that the library needs stuffed chairs (Table 1).

**TABLE 1: USERS’ ASSESSMENT OF FURNITURE SITUATION IN THE LIBRARY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables and Chairs are not up to Standard</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tables and Chairs needs repairs</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library needs stuffed Chairs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Response</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>185</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Extracted from Fieldwork, December, 2012

It is therefore observed from Table 1 that users of Ashanti Regional Library are dissatisfied with the furniture situation in the library because the furniture in the library is woefully inadequate.
to meet the needs of the users. Statistics obtained from the Metropolitan Directorate of Education indicate that there are 54 second cycle schools (made up of 33 private Senior Secondary/Commercial schools and 21 public Senior Secondary, Technical schools and Training Colleges), one full-fledged University, 5 University Colleges and one Polytechnic in the Kumasi metropolis alone. The total enrolment in the basic and second cycle schools in the 2008/2009 academic year alone according to the source is 246,756 (made up of 84,260 pupils and students in public schools and institutions and 162,496 in private institutions respectively) let alone that of the tertiary institutions and if the library could accommodate only 140 at a time of which 40 are in the children’s library, then this gives a course of concern.

Adequacy of ICT Facilities in the Library
Public libraries like the Ashanti Library are the ideal place to offer public access to information and communications technology (ICT) resources because they are staffed by competent professionals whose job is to help people meet and manage their information needs. An ICT driven library acts as an intermediate centre for improving literacy, awareness, welfare and cultural awakening because it has the advantage of speed, accuracy and reliability in the process of information. It can provide online access for 24/7 of e-books and other e-resources (such as online reference and full-text journals), digital collections, wikis etc.

The total number of computers found in the library is ten (10). All these computers are connected to the Internet. These computers are managed by one of the Library Assistants who though not a computer scientist has been given adequate training as a user and in assisting users as well as trouble-shooting of the computers. Although it may appear that given the fact that the total population in Kumasi alone in the year 2000 was 1,170,270, one wonders what 10 computers can do to serve these people. However, given the state of ICT and Internet facilities in Ghana, the Ashanti Library may be doing a good job, by introducing users to ICT and helping them to access information using the ICT resources. This is because the fact that the facilities exists in the library alone is enough since it will encourage users or researchers to use them whenever they need such a facility.

A question posed to users to find out their literacy levels regarding the use of computers revealed that 64.3% of them are computer literate, 11.4% have little knowledge in the use of computers while 24.3% indicated that they do not know how to use computers.

Users’ Impression about the Adequacy of Computers in the Library
On users’ impression about the adequacy of computers in the library, 69.2% responded that they are inadequate while 7% answered in the affirmative. Four users (1.6%) indicated that they were unaware of the existence of computers in the library while 6 respondents (2.2%) did not indicate their response (Figure 12).

![FIGURE 12: ARE THE COMPUTERS IN THE LIBRARY ADEQUATE?](image)

Regarding users’ patronage on the Internet facility at the library, 50.3% responded that they do not use the ICT facility in the library. However, 32.4% responded that they use the ICT facility in the library, while 6.5% did not give a response. Therefore from the above analyses, it could be concluded that majority of the users at Ashanti Library do not use the Internet facility whenever they visit the library.

**Purpose of using the ICT Facility**

On the purpose of using the ICT facility, users gave varied reasons on why they use the library. It is observed that 34.6% of library users responded that they use the internet to look for information for their course work, 27.6% use the Internet to update themselves with new and current events while 18.9% use the net to read their mails. However, 7.0% did not indicate any
response (Figure 13). Thus, it is concluded that majority of Ashanti Regional Library users use the Internet for purposes other than academic such as reading mails and for current events.

![Figure 13: Purpose of Using the Internet Facility at the Library](image)

**Challenges facing the Ashanti Regional Library**

Public libraries in Ghana face a lot of constraints in their effort to carry out the information delivery function. The operations of the Ghana Library Authority do not cover the whole of Ghana. Currently, there are only 62 public libraries in the country. Most of the district capitals do not have public libraries although the District Assembly Act provides that each Assembly should have its own public or community library. The already existing libraries are also starved of grants or money from Central government. Information materials such as reference books, textbooks and journals are inadequate and mostly out of date and sometimes irrelevant. Donations from philanthropic Ghanaians and institutions to public libraries including the Ashanti Regional Library are lacking. The high illiteracy rate and the low reading habits among the literate population in Ghana continue to be a major problem affecting the use of public libraries wherever they exist.
GENERAL COMMENTS

When asked about the users’ impressions on the challenges facing the library, 32.3% of respondents expressed their displeasure about the inadequacy of books (such as fiction and core textbooks, and pamphlets); for users who are Senior High School students, 15% indicated that the books are too old and irrelevant, 13.9% stated that the tables and chairs are inadequate while 11.1% were unhappy about the problem of noise pollution especially motor vehicles (plying on the main road from ‘Kajetia’, from mobile phones from users inside the library and the noise from the Centre for National Culture such as drumming and singing. Other users commented absence of discussion areas, the untidy premises, absence of fire extinguisher, air conditioners, unfriendly and unruly behaviour of some library staff.
CONCLUSION

The public library should provide material in the appropriate media to support formal and informal learning processes. It should also help the patrons to make use of available resources and facilities that would enable them effectively utilize the knowledge, ideas and opinions to study.

The study has so far shown that the Ashanti Regional Library in Kumasi lacks adequate and relevant information resources to meet the ever increasing needs of its users. Not only does it lack quality and sufficient books, ICT infrastructure, personnel, funding, furniture etc. but also lacks adequate space to accommodate its users. The Ghana Library Authority, Ministry of Education and the Government of Ghana must be proactive in solving these challenges facing the Library to enable it perform its role as an effective avenue of generating and disseminating quality information to the citizenry in Kumasi in particular and Ghana in general.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ghana Library Authority should revitalize the public library service in Ghana through the upgrading of book stock, staff training and development; acquisition of ICT equipment and training in the use of these equipment and advocacy, public relations and marketing.

A public library and the services it provides is a long-term investment on behalf of the community. Adequate levels of funding are crucial to the success of a public library in fulfilling its roles. Without sufficient levels of funding over the long-term, it is impossible to develop policies for service provision and make the most effective use of available resources. Enough money is needed to maintain and put up a new library building, augment the collections in the library and increase the number of the computers. There is therefore the need for adequate funding for the library which should be released at periodic intervals to enable the library serve its users.
efficiently. Funding is required not only when a public library is established, but should also be sustained on an assured and regular basis and funding needs make known to community customers.

There is the need for increased training of the staff of the Ashanti Library in the use of ICT to enable them serve users in their search for information and maintenance of the equipment.

The number of computers in the library should be increased as a matter of urgency. Currently, the library boasts of only ten (10) computers which are far below expectation given the population of the users it is meant to serve. The rapid development of technology is gradually moving library materials from hard copies of documents to electronic formats such as electronic databases and formats. Public libraries therefore need to adopt their technology to attract more user patronage. The quality, user friendliness, effectiveness, reliability and regularity of the library’s services can be improved through the use of ICT.

The administration of the public libraries system in Ghana should be decentralised. Since the implementation of the decentralisation policy in Ghana in 1989, more authority and responsibility have been given to the District Assemblies to improve their communities (districts), including managing the public libraries. Regrettably, the public library system has not fully benefitted from the decentralisation policy as major policy decisions regarding acquisition and processing of books are still taken at the national headquarters.

REFERENCES


