HOW TO EFFECTIVELY EXPLOIT THE RESOURCES IN A SCHOOL LIBRARY: A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO SCHOOL LIBRARY USERS

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Abstract

The library being a store of knowledge is very relevant to the educational development of a nation. The role of the school library in the development of the child is also very important. This paper examines the practical steps for using the school library by its community of users; six stages for utilizing the library are highlighted. Other issues discussed include the importance of school library in education, conditions for effective school library services and recommendations postulated.

What is a Library?

It is a store of knowledge where printed and non-printed materials are organized and exhibited for the purpose of effective use by clients. Printed materials here include books, magazines, journals, newspapers, documents, research works, etc. while the non-printed materials on the other hand include realias, media materials like the use of films, cassettes, microfiche, charts, globes, video cassettes, and computer diskettes.

The school library on the other and is where children learning resources are organized, processed and displayed for effective teaching and learning in schools. In a nutshell it is a resource center or media center in any school. It exists to help both students and teachers gain the most they can out of school instruction. This is the centre in the school that supplements the classroom boredom, encourages individualistic studies and independent findings.

Stages for effective use of the library

For effective use of the school library the following stages have to be followed:

(a) Using the catalogue cards

The first stage for the effective use of any library and to trace any material of which either the Author, Title or subject is known by going through the catalogue cards. Catalogue cards are used in the library to summarize vital information on a book. It guides users on where to locate the material on the shelf or within the library. Catalogue cards are processed in three different forms namely:-

(i) Author catalogue

The following information are normally got on the cards.

- Authors Name e.g. Gupiyem, G. G. (Surname first and others initials or written in full).
- Title of material e.g. How to effectively exploit the resources in the library.
- Publishers e.g. University Press.
- Year of publications e.g. 2002
- Other added entries e.g. xi, illus, pages, index, price.

At the top or bottom left of each card is the **accession number** of the material. Also at the top or bottom right of the **card is the call mark** or class mark e.g. 020 for library usage. (using **Dewey Decimal** classification scheme).

Example: Author catalogue cards:

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ACC 098                              030
        Gupiyem, G. G.               GUP
        How to effectively exploit the resources
        in a library, Jos: University Press 2002
                    Xii, 115p
Title
Subject.
```

(ii) Title Catalogue:
- Title e.g. How to effectively exploit the resources in a library.
Author e.g. Gupiyem, G. G.
- Place of Publication e.g. Jos.
- Year of Publication e.g. 2002.
Added entries e.g. Xii, 115p.

Example: Title catalogue card:

```
                          030
                          GUP
How to effectively exploit the resources
in a library/by G. G. Gupiyem
Jos: University Press 2002.
Xii, 115p
1.  Author
2.  Subject
                        Acc 098
```

(iii) Subject Catalogue

Here the subject of the material is indicated at the top of the card before other details as follows:

- **Subject** e.g. librarianship
- **Author** as in Author or Title catalogue card above
- **Title as** in Author or Title Catalogue card above
- **Place** of publication as in Author or title catalogue card above
- **Publishers** as in Author or Title Catalogue Card
- **Added** entries as in Author or Title Catalogue Card above

Example: Subject catalogue card.

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                        Librarianship

Gupiyem, G. G.                              030
How to effectively exploit the resources    GUP
in a library, Jos. University Press 2002
  Xii, 115p

1.  Author
3.  Subject
                                    Acc 098
```

However, it is worth noting that the library catalogue is the key to the services of the library. It is a record of not only books but also of all the materials in the library. Therefore proper use of the catalogue will tell the user whether the library has a particular book by a given author, what books the library has on specific subjects, and their locations on the shelves.

(b) Location of Books on Shelves

From the Catalogue cabinet, the next place of call is browsing of the shelves to trace the material required with the guide of the book "class mark". The class mark at the spine of a book gives general idea on where to locate the material on the shelves but one has to take note of other information like the Author, title, edition and year of publication.

In complex libraries as obtaines in Academic libraries (i.e. Universities) and some public libraries that have large collection, one can go to the circulation desk for help and guidance. Apart from assistance from staff, there are normally guides on the walls, shelves and some areas in the library to guide and direct users e.g.

This way to serials, ▷   Documents, etc.
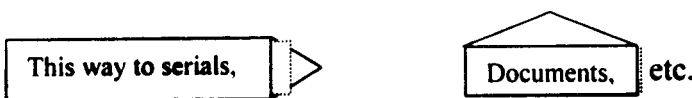
In any library especially well organized libraries certain formats are used i.e. Subject classification or grouping is done to help bring together materials of similar information and subject. Standard classifications schemes like Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) or Library of Congress (LC) is/are used: Below is exampl₂ of the two standard classification schemes commonly used in Nigerian libraries.

Dewey Decimal Classification Scheme		Library of Congress Scheme		
Class Mark	Subject	Class Mark		Subject
		A	-	General Works
0 – 99	General works e.g. encyclopedia library books or books of General How the mind works	B	-	Philosophy
		C	-	Auxiliary Science of
		D	-	History (General)
200-399	Religion (all religions)	E-F	-	American (General)
300 – 399	Social Science e.g. Sociology, Government Political Science, Economic, Education (all aspects), Statistics, Law Public Administration, Social welfare, Trade & Commerce, Transport & Communication etc	G	-	Geography
		H	-	Social Science
		J	-	Political Science
		K	-	Law
		L	-	Education (General)
400-499	Languages e.g. French, English, Hausa, Berom etc.	M	-	Music
		N	-	Visual Arts (General)
500 – 599	Pure Sciences e.g. General Science, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, etc.	P	-	Philosophy & Linguistics (General)
600 – 699	Technology (Applied Sciences) e.g. Vocational Subjects Engineering, Farming, Industry, Business education, etc.	Q	-	Science (General)
		R	-	Medicine
		S	-	Agriculture (General)
700 –799	Arts e.g. Music, Hobbies, Sports Games, Fine Arts, etc.	T	-	Technology (General)
		U	-	Military Science (General)
800-899	Literature e.g. Poetry, Plays, History of Literature and Fictions.	V	-	Naval Science
		Z	-	Library Science Bibliography
900-999	History, Geography, Biographies, Travel Books etc.			

It is important that users get themselves acquitted to these schemes for ease of location of resources in any Library.

(c) The Reading Table

If the right material has been traced from the shelf then get a place in the reading room or space and go through the CONTENTS of the book and carefully note what are relevant to your information needs, then open to the page and go through very carefully. If the material contents carry lots of information that you cannot go through in a short period of time then take it to the circulation desk for borrowing. Before borrowing, make sure you satisfy the conditions for borrowing in such a library (i.e. you have to be a registered member of the library or the school).

(d) On the circulation desk

This is where the charging and discharging in any library is undertaken. Here the officer in charge scrutinizes the time, identity of the borrower, checks the condition of the material and charges the material accordingly. In most school libraries the "ledger system" is used whereas in well developed libraries the "book card system" is used. Whatever system is being used in a library the basic thing each library requires is

detail of the material and contact address or security number of the borrower, which will have to be in the library record book. When returning any borrowed material, the client is expected to return it on the Circulation serial desk for discharging or renewal.

(e) Using Reference and Serial Materials

These are materials that are meant to be consulted in the library only, unless a user wants to photocopy part of such material and there is no photocopying machine available in the library, then such materials can be signed out for a short period of time.

Newspapers, magazines and journals give current information or current news, they are reserved materials that can be consulted on demand from the Serial librarian or Library Assistant.

(f) Checking for up-to-date books

The title of a book rarely tells us whether the information is up-to-date or not, this can be checked from the date of publication, which is usually printed on the title page or on the back of the title page expressed Obi (1977). When a book is altered to bring it up-to-date, the altered version is called the second edition or 3rd edition, etc.

Importance of Library in Education

Library should and could contribute to enrich all the education aims of the individual, it also plays vital role in enhancing effective learning and teaching in any school. However, its roles as stated by Gupiyem (1988) include:

(a) to teach and exercise pupils in the use of books and of a collection of books as tools of inquiry.

(b) To stimulate and encourage free-choice reading, both as means of acquiring facility in reading and for the enrichment of experience, mind and personality which worth while reading brings.

(c) To implant in the pupils the confident assumption that a library is the natural place to obtain information.

(d) To train children to have self control, respect for public properties and other social disciplines.

(e) To help foster a love for reading among the young ones.

(f) It aids the teachers in planning their lessons and for acquiring teaching aids.

It is a truism that where the foundation of a building is faulty, it is anybody's guess that the subsequent walls are bound to be imperfect. Instruments of education are learning resources; As a concept it relates to different areas which facilitate better learning and teaching through the acquisition, storage, organization, display and dissemination of relevant materials. Therefore, the importance of learning resources in our schools

need not be over-emphasised, they are the main sources of knowledge by which the students and teachers can conveniently explore. It is the age-long wealth of human experience on the planet earth and other universe. Therefore, it is not enough to have just a number of class textbooks, however attractively these may have been written and produced. Being in a jet period with lots of technological advancement, children need a store of knowledge from which they can draw at all times. These must be materials suitable to their age and development, and in which they can make follow-up and to enlarge their own interest, illuminate their minds, and enrich their growing consciousness of the world in and around them stressed Grim, (1963).

Conditions for effective school library services

For effective school library or school resource centre the managerial activities necessary for the full utilization of the resources must be well planned for and efficiently executed.

The teacher-librarian or the school library assistant in conjunction should do selection of materials in the library with subject teachers. To enhance effective selection, criteria for selection as related to the objectives of the institution should be put into consideration.

If the resources of the school library will be used effectively to support, compliment and to enrich the classroom instruction then teacher-librarians should be recognized in schools because they need to be involved in the actual planning of the curriculum.

The library collections should be organized in a logical manner labeled and arranged by subject classification and must have an index called 'catalogue'. Effective record keeping of all materials, which are borrowed from the school library, should be done.

Recommendations

(1) For students to exploit the library effectively and to make the library a friend, "library clubs" should be formed in schools, so that such clubs will plan seminars and talks on the role of the school library.

(2) Teachers should show example by using the library materials in planning their lesson notes and forming notes for students rather than being married to only the class recommended textbooks that makes it boring for the students who have personal copies of the recommended textbooks.

(3) School administrators should allocate funds for the purchase of newspapers, magazines, journals and current editions of books, etc, because these up-to-date materials attract users to the library.

(4) Government should fund, and encourage the establishment of libraries in schools by offering to the library services portion of the Ministry's yearly budget.

(5) Library assistants or library attendants should be recruited in schools to take care of the technical processing and well being of the library materials. Where there is no full time professional, the teacher librarian should be allocated few lessons so that he or she can spend most of the time in the library to encourage users.

(6) Schools should be registered members of Nigerian School Library Association so that it will pursue the cause of library development and maintenance for the appropriate sector.

(7) Parents Teachers Association needs to be mobilized to aid in the development and maintenance of library services, in schools to supplement Government effort.

(8) Other clubs like Reading Association of Nigeria (RAN), Young Readers Club (YRC), Current Affairs Club, etc, that lay emphasis on reading for pleasure should be established in schools.

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