Research Article

LOBBYING AND ADVOCACY FOR IMPROVED LIBRARY DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICES IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

[1,*]Ngozi P. Osuchukwu, [2]Cyprain C. Anyadiegwu, [3]Ebere A. Eneh and [4]Adaeze N. Nzewi

[1,*]Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) Onitsha, Nigeria
[2]Nwabueze Library, College of Education (Technical) Umunze, Nigeria
[3]Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nnewi Campus, Nigeria
[4]Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital, Nnewi, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the issues of lobbying and advocacy for improved library development and services in Anambra state, Nigeria. It investigated the involvement of the librarians and their willingness to be trained on the strategies of lobbying and advocacy. It also identified the challenges that affect lobbying and advocacy. The descriptive survey research design was adopted using designed questionnaire for data collection. The members of Nigerian Library Association, Anambra State Chapter working in the library schools and other libraries in the state constituted the population of the study. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and mean. The study found total non-involvement of librarians in lobbying program, although, some librarians are engaged in advocacy activities. They also indicated their willingness for capacity building. Also revealed was the identification of infrastructure, budget allocation, positive legislation for library development and services as the areas that should be on priority list. It was found out among other things that time, expenses, fatigue, impede effective lobbying and advocacy. The study recommended that Nigerian Library Association should engage all sectors of libraries in articulating the best practices and areas that need immediate lobbying and advocacy.

INTRODUCTION

Lobbying and advocacy are two winged seeds that are used interchangeably for issues that require adjustment and change. While lobbying attempts to influence decisions made by officials in the government, most often legislators or members of regulating agencies (Association of Genetic Technologists (AGT) (2014), advocacy tends to plead in favor of or to support, promote and defend publicly (Gorman, 2005). In librarianship, therefore, they mean seeking to influence the public officials and decision makers towards supporting or formulating policies that have positive effect on libraries (Ireri, 2014). In other words, it is soliciting the supports of influential persons for library development and services. There is nothing mysterious about lobbying and advocacy. They are totally communication processes which Mayhew (1997) explained need developed various methods, strategies and tactics to gain access, inform, influence and pressure policy makers decision that affect the well being of their clients.

*Corresponding author: Ngozi P. Osuchukwu,
Justice Development and Peace Commission (JDPC) Onitsha, Nigeria.

Basically, lobbying is embedded in advocacy. That is why Arroyo *et al*. (2002, p.82) described it as a deliberate attempt to influence political decisions through various forms of advocacy. Both lobbying and advocacy increase the scope of influence to improve policies and achieve structural changes in key areas like agriculture, health, education and trade (Sloot and Geanderso, 2010). This makes lobbying a specialized form of advocacy. Therefore, successful lobbying combines advocacy activities with clear public relations. The easy access to budget documents and tracking as well as the freedom of information Act (FOIA) passed in 2011 have unraveled the mystery behind government decisions and policies.

This is the reason librarians and other professionals should unite to work together, on specific issues, on tactics to deal with government departments for efficiency and effectiveness to achieve greater influence (British Overseas NGOs for Development) (BOND) (2014). There is need to build the capacity, to learn to become involved in and influence political process because when voices join together, they get heard. It is a known fact that things are not going well in the library sector. This all important sector always has its program jeopardized by changing political environment and drastic budget cuts.

A UK based public library advocacy campaign with the slogan "voices for the Library" on August 2010 started a website providing views on the importance of libraries and a list of libraries threatened with closure (Guardian, 2011). These picked up supports from thousands of people around the world and helped to organize a "save our libraries" day of action on 5th February, 2011. Again, the Canadian Library Association/Association (2011), advocated to the federal government on the issues of public policy and funding with particular interest for the areas of illiteracy, privacy and access to information for print-disabled Canadians. The Italian Library Association's work group on advocacy also strived to build on the work done by IFLA in Italian libraries in the areas of public relations, librarian professional development and demonstration of the benefits of libraries to the cultural and educational aspects of the society (Associazione Italiana Biblioteche, 2009).

Thus, the change in information seeking behavior, needs and a visible change in library pattern, necessitate the need for librarians to come out of their closets and comfort zones and talk to the people outside their profession. The library systems must be known by policy makers in the country. It is in this view that Wiscons in Library Association (2014) recommended fully fledged high powered lobbying efforts which include regular affirmative lobbying and advocacy on all major library initiatives. It also recommended minimum lobbying activities to include face to face contacts with government officials to verify commitments, identify potential problems and cover gaps where libraries networks do not have active input. Librarians need to come up with well thought strategies for lobbying and advocacy if they are to survive in this era of great competition and information explosion. They must generate innovative concepts that represent concrete impact on libraries and the people they serve.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to examine the framework of lobbying and advocacy in improving library development and services in Anambra state. Specifically, the study aims to:

- Find out if the librarians in Anambra state are involved in the activities of lobbying and advocacy for improved library development.
- Establish the willingness of the librarians to acquire lobbying and advocacy skills.
- Find out the lobbying and advocacy strategies favored by librarians in Anambra state.
- Examine the areas of library development and services that require lobbying and advocacy.
- Identify variables that challenge effective lobbying and advocacy

Statement of the problem

Library is meant to be keenly involved in social, economic, cultural and lifelong learning of the people. It is the only institution that offers free access to knowledge to both high and the lowly citizens. Yet it is not accorded high priority in planning and development by governing institutions. As Mlanga (2014) put it, libraries have always had to justify their existence to sponsors as they are not considered as 'essential'

as compared to sectors like health, education, roads, etc. It is now time for librarians to rethink what library is all about, what is needed, what will be used and what is sustainable in our environment (Issak, 2000). It is time other people outside the profession are reminded of the values of libraries. Perhaps that is why Voices for the Library (2012) stated that the National Federation of Women's Institute (NFWI) announced a joint lobby of parliament calling on politicians to protect vital library services. Librarians' voices must become audible in convincing everyone including the grassroots, legislators and leaders at all levels on the need to let libraries exist positively.

Literature review

The call to be involved in public awareness campaign initiative in promoting the values of libraries and librarians was started in 2001 by American Library Association (ALA, 2014). The campaign was for all types of libraries which led to the creation of a website: "@yourlibrary.com" where programming ideas, sample press materials, downloadable artwork, tips and suggestions are made free and designed to be customized by any library to conduct their own public relations. This has revealed the importance of being involved and the willingness to represent our libraries, hence, the call for capacity building. Many online resources also abound for learning techniques of lobbying and advocacy. International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) (2012) recommended some websites on advocacy. It recommended that advocacy toolkit by American Association of School Librarians, Advocacy resource centre of the American Library Association, Advocacy and lobbying Workshop of Book aid International and a brochure devoted to advocacy of school libraries are good resources for training. ALA also has an office for library advocacy that supports the efforts of advocates seeking to improve libraries of all types by developing resources, a peer-to-peer advocacy network and training for advocates at the local, state and national levels (ALA, 2014).

Thus, efficient lobbyists and advocates can be made out of librarians. According to Cooper (2014), lobbyists come from all walks of life, possessing strong communication skills and knowledge of the legislative process as well as the organization or industry they represent. The learning and training help build the capacity and professionalism of the sector. This is where steps for lobbying and basics of advocacy are stepped down. In support Vidotto (2014) explained that individuals can also lobby as an act of volunteering or as a small part of their normal job. Example, a librarian can meet with a representative about an issue important to librarianship. The capacity building is directed towards acquiring skills on how to relate with major stakeholders, power holders in the community and civil society organizations (Justice Development and Peace Commission) (JDPC), 2012; Mlanga, 2014). These are assessed with identifying specific goals, appropriate target, methods to employ and the particular people or person to take specific actions. This is all about persuasion, knowing the system as well as being familiar with the individuals involved in the process (AGT, 2014). Training embraces the principle of effective lobbying which include, accuracy, brevity, clear, knowing your opinion, seeing it their own way, follow-up, sending a thank you note, recognizing and appreciating any effort made (Ireri 2014).

Research has shown that many professionals, business owners, groups of constituents, individuals, commercial organizations, civil organizations, etc employ various methods of lobbying and advocacy in influencing the opinions of the law makers. Example is the report of a well known school librarian Laura Bush, ex First Lady of USA who has a Master's degree in Library science and worked as a public school teacher and librarian in Houston. She organized a White House Conference on School Libraries advocating the need of supporting different library systems (The Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries, 2002). Indeed, everything goes into lobbying and advocacy – research, planning and strategy. New Encyclopedia Britannica (2005) and Ireri (2014) informed that letters can be written to inform legislators expressing the views of the support required from them towards the libraries, sending e-mails, telephoning and sending delegates/face to face contacts with government officials (WLA, 2014). Studies have also revealed other ways of lobbying without contacting legislators directly. These are; talking with reporter and editors about the issue that needed addressing, participating in radio call-in shows, distributing action flyers in public meetings and other strategic points, reach out to other organizations to enlist their support in grassroots lobbying.

Evidences of library development and services in Nigeria have been reported to have declined dramatically over the past ten years, reflecting the economic situation of the country (Issak, 2000). Budget for library development and services have been known to become tighter. The study by Ireri (2014) on lobbying and fundraising strategies for libraries in Kenya has identified infrastructure, funding, reading culture, capacity building, current data base, legal frameworks and library development as areas that need lobbying for greater services. Furthermore, Mlanga (2014) informed that establishment of libraries, determining portion in ministerial budget, board representation, depository rules, resource sharing rules, salaries, etc all have roots in legislation. Therefore, libraries need to penetrate the political scene and meet with decision makers on the importance of library systems in the society.

Conversely, challenges to lobby and advocacy have been identified. Many libraries have suffered either from lack of advocacy or lack of support. Mlanga (2014) noted that community can control the timing of its advocacy work and the amount of dissent that is made public to the people. Others are expenses involved in the communication and public relations of lobbying and advocacy, changes in government, lack of trained librarians in lobbying and advocacy as well as apolitical nature of librarians. Disturbing issues are the ethics and morality of lobbying which suggest that lobbyists employ questionable tactics to win legislation for special interests, thereby labeling them with sinister images. On the contrary, this image is considered unjust declaring that lobbyists perform legitimate and necessary function by presenting diverse social viewpoints and technical skills to help frame legislation (Dawald, 2009).

METHODOLOGY

This study employed descriptive survey research design. Data were collected through the administration of structured questionnaire tailored into likert model of four scale weight (SA-strongly agree; A-agree; D-disagree and SD-strongly disagree) (VHE-very high extent; GE-great extent; LE-low extent and VLE-very low extent). The members of Nigerian Library Association, Anambra state Chapter working in the library schools and other libraries in the state constituted the population of the study. The libraries are Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka; Paul University, Awka; Madonna University, Okija; Anambra state University; Federal Polytechnic Oko; Federal College of Education, (Technical), Umunze; Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe; Anambra State Library Board and Tansian University, Oba. Thus, 100 questionnaires were distributed but 88 were duly answered and valid for the study giving a return rate 88%. The data was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. Mean scores were calculated with midpoint of 2.5. Responses rated below 2.5 were rejected while responses above 2.5 were accepted.

RESULTS

The objectives of the study formed the basis of data analysis. The data analysis used frequency counts, percentages and mean. Information on the demographic distribution shows that male respondents of the questionnaire were 19 (21.5%) while female respondents were 69 (78.4%). The Table also shows that 17 (19.31%) respondents were from public libraries, 67 (76.1%) from academic libraries and 4 (4.5%) were from special libraries. Also shown is the working experiences of the respondents: 23 (26.13%) have worked for less than 5 years, 16 (18.2%) between 6-10years; 5 (5.7%) between 11-16years; 12 (13.63%) between 17-22 years; 17 (19.31%) between 23-29 years and 15 (17%) from 30years and above. On the educational qualifications, the data shows that 15 (17%) respondents possessed NCE/ND certificates; 49 (55.7%) respondents have HND/BLIS certificates; 21 (23.9%) respondents have MLIS while 3 (3.4%) possessed P.hD certificates.

Data on the involvement of librarians in lobbying and advocacy activities in Table 2 shows absolute non involvement as depicted by mean score below the midpoint value of 2.5. The frequency counts and percentages collaborated with the mean score. However, on the related question which sought to know the activities the respondents have been involved in, in their libraries, 42 (47.71%) respondents admitted advocacy; 6 (6.8%) respondents disclosed advocacy while 40 (45.5%) respondents revealed that they have never been involved in either lobbying or advocacy. The respondents were required to indicate their willingness to be trained on the tactics of lobbying and advocacy.

The Table shows that 21 (23.8%) respondents do not want to become lobbyists but would give their supports while 61 (69.3%) advocated for in-house training. Also shown is the indication of 6 (6.8%) respondents who preferred hiring the services of professional lobbyists. Findings on the preferred training program for lobbying and advocacy tactics revealed full agreement in favor of all the items listed as shown by all the mean scores above the midpoint value of 2.5. The simple frequencies also revealed the great positive answers on the trainings as more than 50% of the respondents desired to be trained through organized workshops and conferences, together with in-house training.

Table 1. Demographic information

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender		
	• Male	19	21.5
	• Female	69	78.4
2.	Types of library		
	• Public	17	19.31
	• Academic	67	76.1
	• Special	4	4.5
3.	Working experience		
	• 1-5	24	27.2
	• 6-10	18	20.45
	• 11-16	11	12.5
	• 17-22	12	13.6
	• 23-29	14	15.9
	• 30 and above	9	10.22
4.	Educational qualification		
	• ND/NCE	15	17.04
	• HND/BLIS	49	55.7
	• MLIS	21	23.9
	• PhD	3	3.4

Table 2. Involvement of Librarians in lobbying and advocacy

S/N	Item	Very often Freq %		Often Freq %		Occasionally Freq %		Not at all Freq %		Mean	Decision
1.	Lobbying	-	-	-	-	6	6.8	82	93.18	1	Rejected
2.	Advocacy	18	20.45	21	23.8	17	19.31	32	36.36	2.28	Rejected

Table 3. Willingness to be trained in lobbying and advocacy tactics for library development

S/N	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1.	I do not want to become a lobbyist but will give my supports	21	23.8
2.	I would like an in-house training on lobbying and advocacy	61	69.3
3.	I would rather a lobbyist is hired to do the lobbying	6	6.8

Table 4. Preferred training on the lobbying and advocacy tactics

S/N	Item	SA Freq	%	A Freq	%	D Freq	%	SD Freq	%	M	D
1.	In-house training	44	50	35	39.7	5	5.7	4	4.5	3	A
2.	Organized workshops and conference	46	52.2	30	34	5	5.7	7	7.9	3.44	A
3.	Putting them in LIS curriculum	33	37.5	43	40.8	7	7.9	5	5.7	3	A

Note: SA- Strongly Agree;   A-Agree;   D-Disagree;   SD-Strongly Disagree;   M-Mean;   D-Decision

Table 5. Rating the extent of the following lobbying and advocacy strategies

S/N	Item	VHE Freq	%	GE Freq %		LE Freq %		VLE Freq	%	M	D
1.	Letter writing	38	43.18	34	38.63	7	7.9	9	10.22	3.15	A
2.	E-mail	36	40.9	28	31.81	11	12.5	13	14.7	2.99	A
3.	Phone call	35	39.7	29	32.95	15	17	9	10.22	3.19	A
4.	Visiting/One-on-one discussion	45	51.1	38	43.18	5	5.7	-	-	3.45	A
5.	Going through the media	32	36.36	43	48.8	7	7.9	6	6.8	3.15	A
6.	Going through the interest group	30	34	44	50	10	11.3	4	4.5	3.14	A

Note: VHE-Very High Extent;   GE-Great Extent;   LE-Low Extent;   VLE-Very Low Extent; M- Mean;   D-Decision

Table 6. Areas of library development and services that should be lobbied and advocated for

S/N	Item	SA Freq %		A Freq	%	D Freq %		SD Freq	%	M	D
1.	Infrastructure	54	61.3	25	28.4	9	10.2	-	-	3.61	A
2.	Visible shift in Librarians and libraries statuses	26	29.5	55	62.5	7	7.9	-	-	3.22	A
3.	Positive legislation for library services and development	36	40.9	29	32.9	13	14.7	10	11.3	3.30	A
4.	Deteriorating library services	38	43.1	30	34	12	13.6	8	9	3.11	A
5.	Upgrading of libraries and internet facilities/services	45	51.1	26	29.5	9	3.11	8	9	3.23	A
6.	Increased budget allocation	60	68.1	28	38.1	-	-	-	-	3.68	A

Note: SA- Strongly Agree;   A-Agree;   D-Disagree;   SD-Strongly Disagree;   M-Mean;   D-Decision

Responses on the rate of extent of the strategies for lobbying and advocacy show high support of the methods enumerated with all the mean scores well above 2.5. The data shows the support that will be accorded the strategies mapped out. This is presented in Table 5.

Table 6 shows that respondents are passionate about the aspects of library development and services to be impacted on positively. Items 1 and 6 have the highest score which shows the priority of demand of the respondents. Therefore, with all the mean scores above 3.00, respondents know what they want.

Table 7. Perceived challenges to library lobbying and advocacy

S/N	Item	SA %	Freq	A %	Freq	D %	Freq	SD Freq %		M	D
1.	Time for lobbying and advocacy may affect library working hours	30	34	37	42	9	10.2	12	13.6	2.97	A
2.	Expenses involved in carrying out lobbying and advocacy	28	38.1	42	47.7	12	13.6	6	6.8	3.05	A
3.	Amount of fatigue experienced in dealing with a particular issue	23	26.1	44	50	15	17	6	6.8	2.95	A
4.	Lack of professional lobbyists within the library profession	24	27.2	37	42	20	22.7	7	7.9	3.11	A
5.	No professional librarian within the corridors of power to facilitate issues	28	38.1	24	27.2	26	29.5	10	11.3	2.81	A
6.	Regular travelling to federal/state capitals and communities where stakeholders reside	14	15.9	25	28.4	34	38.6	15	17	2.45	R
7.	Evasiveness of lawmakers and stakeholders	26	29.5	32	36.3	20	22.7	10	11.3	3.07	A
8.	Scandals associated with questionable tactics of lobbyists	15	17	31	35.2	32	36.3	10	11.3	2.58	A

Note: SA- Strongly Agree;   A-Agree;   D-Disagree;   SD-Strongly Disagree;   M-Mean;   D-Decision.

Data on Table 7 reveals the variables which may affect effective lobbying and advocacy. The respondents show more support except in item 6 which fell below the midpoint of 2.5 mean score.

DISCUSSION

The results on the demographic description which revealed more number of female librarians than men in Anambra state Table 1 depict the gender disparity in library profession as disclosed by Osuigwe *et al.* (2012). But that notwithstanding, the findings that greater number of librarians are young in profession (1-5 years and 6-10 years) showed the good prospects of fitting in, in the mainstream activities of modern society. This Mlanga (2014) termed positioning ourselves for advocacy and help rediscover our main mission: that of servicing the society. The result of more respondents from academic libraries is not surprising since Anambra state has many institutions of higher learning with functional libraries. The respondents availed themselves of this opportunity and advance their careers academically, through various professional programs as can be seen in the number of HND/BLIS and MLIS Table 1.

The less than midpoint value of mean score in Table 2 showed that the librarians are yet to grasp the great effect lobbying and advocacy can make in library development and services. This could be attributed to lack of capacity building that informs the best strategies to advocate changes on the image of the profession. The implication is that libraries and librarians will always be at the mercy of federal/state and local government with regards to positive change in statuses. Thus, trainings Tables 3 and 4 as well as being involved in solid advocacy and lobbying programs are essential to any library (ALA, 2014; Ireri, 2014; Pearson, 2009) because getting involved is not only a right but a responsibility (Winged Seed, 2010).

The views on the rate of extent of lobbying and advocacy strategies scaling above the midpoint value of mean score Table 5) revealed the ingenuity of the respondents on identifying effective lobbying and advocacy activities which combine public relations. Thus, confirming the studies New Encyclopaedia Britannica (2005), Ireri (2014) and WLA (2014) that different approaches can be used as far as they are strategic and planned.

Furthermore, media campaign, interest groups, newspaper releases and conferences were also identified as useful strategies which Laura Bush Foundation for America's Libraries (2002), Sloot and Gaenderso (2010) established. The essence is to be creative, employing initiative which in turn embraces public relations. However, results indicating the areas of library development and services that need to be prioritized Table 6 were acknowledged by Save Libraries (2014), Mlanga (2014) and Ireri (2014) revealing the most pressing needs which are infrastructure and budget allocation. Inadequate funds have always been a challenge to library development and services.

The fact remains that every librarian is good enough to move right to the top of priority list of law makers. Lobbying and advocacy can achieve this. The responses on the perceived challenges of lobbying and advocacy in Table 7 indicated the need to be objective and constructive in changing the course of libraries and librarians. The results are synonymous with the studies of Winged Seed (2010), Boundless (2014) and Britannica Concise Encyclopedia (2014) that lobbying and advocacy are not easy. One can truly be put off or even be afraid to speak up when something is not quite right. Perhaps it is because librarians are not political but the simple act of being persuasive in promotion or defense of a cause can change public opinion to get public support.

Conclusion

The importance of libraries in providing access to learning and as a vital lifeline in the society cannot be over emphasized. Librarians have always wanted the best for their clients but the reality behind political decisions-making processes have made libraries and librarians to be invisible. Therefore, the new image of librarianship can only be achieved if lobbying and advocacy activities are taken up. It is time the voices of librarians are heard and the law makers acknowledge the importance of library services. We may not always have our ways but advocacy and lobbying never stop. With capacity building, losses will be accepted well naturedly with the mindset that political atmosphere changes in that a new legislator may support what the previous legislator refused to acknowledge.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

- All State Chapters can organize special events in their states inviting library supporters to meet and speak with state legislators.
- A chain story can be collated and put into beautiful pictorial format. The initiative is to have easy advocate handout that proves the significance of library as well as boost public awareness.
- NLA should seriously chart the modules of capacity building and engage all sectors of libraries in articulating the areas that need immediate lobbying and advocacy and the best strategy to adopt

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