

*Full Length Research*

## Library Exhibition: A Veritable tool for Promoting Collections and Services in Nigerian Libraries

ASAOLU Aderonke Olufunke<sup>\*1</sup>, FAGBOHUN Michael Opeoluwa<sup>2</sup> and OSINULU Ifeakachuku<sup>3</sup>

<sup>\*1</sup>Centre for Learning Resources, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria.

<sup>\*1</sup>Corresponding Author's E-mail: [aderonke.asaolu@covenantuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:aderonke.asaolu@covenantuniversity.edu.ng)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Library, Archival and Information Studies, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

E-mail: [fagbohunmichael@gmail.com](mailto:fagbohunmichael@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup>Centre for Learning Resources, Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria.

E-mail: [ifeakachuku.osinulu@covenantuniversity.edu.ng](mailto:ifeakachuku.osinulu@covenantuniversity.edu.ng)

Accepted 28 March 2015

This study investigated exhibition practices and challenges militating against it in Nigerian libraries. The study employed case study approach and 29 libraries were represented. Data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire which was administered at Nigeria Library Association (NLA) Cataloguing, Indexing and Classification Section workshop held in Makurdi, Benue State in year 2013, and method of data analysis was simple percentages. The study revealed that majority of Nigerian libraries (62.1%) were currently involved in exhibition and displays, 69% of libraries hold only physical exhibition, 45% frequently hold exhibitions between 3 – 6 months while others (58.6%) lasted between 1 – 4 weeks. The purpose of exhibition include: education, awareness, increased sense of aesthetic and promotion of available resources. Lack of exhibition policy (96.6%), lack of display equipment (93.1%), lack of formal training 86.2%, and inadequate resources – money, space (82.8%) were identified as inhibitors to library exhibition and displays in Nigeria. Physical exhibition and display is predominant. There is a need to explore the use of electronic resources, social networking sites and the Internet for online exhibition. The management of Nigerian libraries should provide exhibition guidelines, display equipment and materials needed for mounting exhibition, training for exhibit librarians and library schools should incorporate exhibition into the curriculum.

**Keywords:** Exhibition, library service, Nigeria, Promotion, Exhibition Challenges

**Cite This Article As:** ASAOLU AO, FAGBOHUN MO, OSINULU I (2015). Library Exhibition: A Veritable tool for Promoting Collections and Services in Nigerian Libraries. *Inter. J. Acad. Lib. Info. Sci.* 3(3): 97-105.

### INTRODUCTION

Libraries are saddled with the responsibility of providing information services that will support the aesthetic, cultural, recreational, educational, economic and technological activities of users irrespective of their status, age and gender. Since information provision and

users' satisfaction are crucial to librarianship, libraries and librarians for age long have been in the art of seeking for means of wooing clientele. Advertising/marketing is an essential instrument that libraries use in creating awareness of their services and resources in order to

attain its objectives and maintain its status as the hub of knowledge. Advertisement is employed not only in the profit making industry, but also in the non-profit making organisations like libraries to draw the attention of her clientele towards its services and resources.

History has it that as early as 1876, librarians introduced marketing techniques in the library profession (Kumar, 2004). Librarians were innovative, goal getters and serious about library and information service business at that time, different strategies were adopted in wooing library users. Some of the strategies deployed include banners, streetcar signs, direct mail, telephone solicitation and exhibition. Though all these were not formerly introduced until 1970s when formal marketing started taking place. Advertising surfaced only in public library articles in 1896 (Gupta and Savard, 2010), because libraries must develop new promotional strategies to reach out to current and potential users (Schmidt, 2007) exhibition became the instrument of promotional and marketing communication in libraries.

Exhibition is defined as a public display of books, artefacts, objects, and other materials. Exhibitions can be online, physical or a combination of the two and of any scale or duration, within the literature it is obvious that library exhibitions fall into two major types: physical and online. The exhibition construct has been chosen over display, as exhibition is more encompassing; the word is inclusive of both large scale exhibitions as well as small displays (Williams, 2011). Velarde (2001) averred that regardless of the category or purpose, all exhibitions deal with the same elements: information, people, objects and space. Exhibition is part of marketing or advertisement strategies library and information centres adopt to promote their services and resources. Brochures containing information, flyers, pamphlets, posters are displayed in designated areas within the libraries. Williams (2011) citing Schaeffer (1991) posited that exhibitions are adjudged to be a major promotional instrument within a library's marketing strategy, as exhibitions are one of the most visual means of showcasing what the library can offer. Exhibition is a precious marketing tool, a poor exhibition can cause dent to the reputation of the library (Cleeve, 1995).

The exhibition of materials from their holdings is a common technique adopted by libraries to advertise their collections and services. On few occasions, mostly during workshops, seminars and book launch, vendors or publishers are requested to exhibit their products. There are policies guiding display and exhibition. Exhibition and display are programmes designed to get reader's attention and stimulate their interest and quest for information.

Libraries need to enhance the marketing strategies of the services and collections in order to remain relevant in the 21st century (Giuliano, 2009). Libraries have been exploring different strategies to market their services

such as newsletters, orientation programmes, notice board, meetings and university gatherings to sensitize members, training programmes, flyers, poster, in-house newsletters, local press, billboards, posters, on-screen announcements, radio, cinema advertisements, Television commercials, and networks. In-house information services are commonly used through leaflets and brochures, which are aimed at a target user group. However, in modern times, exhibition is not limited to the walls of the library. It is also done on the street, through flyers or through conventional mass media. In the 21st century, libraries employ digital or online display such as news flash on library website, RSS feeds, weblogs, sending of emails and messages through the social networking for marketing library and information services. The emergence of Information Communication Technology (ICT) since 1980s revolutionised every facet of operation and services of libraries. It became expedient for libraries to deploy ICT for display and exhibition of their collections and services. The adoption of ICT has made it possible for libraries to cover a wider range in their exhibition and display activities. Unlike the traditional method which was limited to within the library building, exhibition and display are carried out online through the Internet on library websites, social networking sites and RSS.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Considering the importance of exhibition activity in libraries as a means of marketing library services, it seems that information professionals in Nigeria have not identified the worth of exhibition also little or no attention has been paid to exhibition activity. Empirical research on exhibition is understudied. Hence, on this backdrop, the study seeks to investigate library exhibition as a veritable tool for promoting library and information services and resources in Nigeria.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The general objective of this study is to investigate the exhibition activities and practices adopted for promotion of library and information services in Nigeria and the specific objectives are to:

1. examine if exhibition works take place in Nigerian libraries;
2. find out the major ways library exhibition take place in Nigerian libraries;
3. investigate how often exhibition activities take place in Nigerian libraries;
4. find out the duration of exhibition;
5. examine the purpose of exhibition; and

**Table 1:** Demographic Information of Respondents

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Type of Library</b>	Federal	5	17.2
	State	4	13.8
	Private	3	10.3
	Research	5	17.2
	Polytechnic	7	24.1
	College of Education	3	10.3
	Public Library	2	6.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Sex</b>	Female	10	34.5
	Male	19	65.5
	Total	29	100.0
<b>Age</b>	26-34	3	10.3
	35-44	8	27.6
	45-54	12	41.4
	55-64	6	20.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Position</b>	Library Portal	2	6.9
	Assistant Librarian	3	10.3
	Higher Library Officer	1	3.4
	Librarian II	3	10.3
	Librarian I	9	31.0
	Senior Librarian	6	20.7
	Principal Librarian	3	10.3
	Assistant Chief Librarian	1	3.4
	Chief Librarian	1	3.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>100.0</b>

6. Identify the problems militating against the adoption of exhibitions by Nigerian libraries for marketing of their collections and services.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that would this study are the following:

1. Have Nigerian libraries adopted exhibition for marketing of their collections and services?
2. What methods of exhibition are adopted by Nigeria libraries? (Physical, Online or both)
3. How often do exhibition activities take place in Nigerian libraries? Would there be exhibition in the forthcoming year?
4. How long does an exhibition event last?
5. What is the purpose of exhibition?
6. What are the problems militating against the adoption of exhibition by Nigerian libraries for marketing of their collections and services?

## METHODOLOGY

The study employed case study approach and 50 libraries were represented. To gather data that is truly representative of Nigerian libraries, questionnaire was administered at Nigeria Library Association (NLA) Cataloguing and Classification Section Annual Workshop held at Makurdi, Benue State in 2013. As a follow up to the questionnaire that was administered, representatives of the libraries were also interviewed. A total of 29 completed questionnaires were retrieved, and all were found to be usable. The data was analysed using simple percentage. The results are presented below:

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 above reveals that the respondents were made up of 24.1% from the Polytechnic libraries, 17.2% each from Federal and Research libraries, 13.8% from State libraries 10.3% each from Private and College of Education libraries while 6.9% came from Public

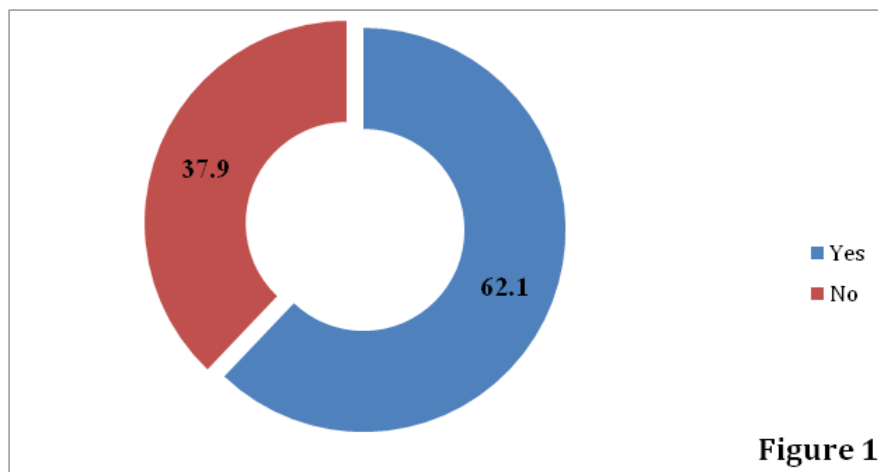


Figure 1

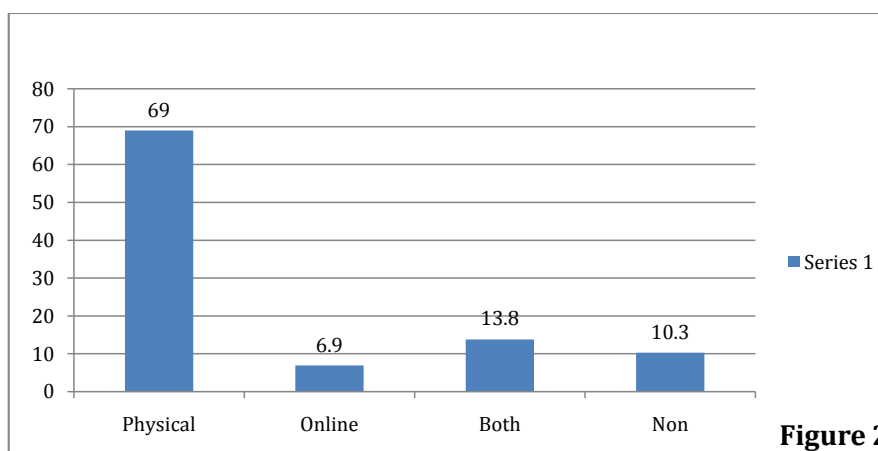


Figure 2

Libraries.

In terms of their gender, 65.5% were male respondents while 34.5% were female.

Most of the respondents 41.4% were in the age group 45 to 54 years while 27.6% belong to the age group of 35 to 44 years, 20.7% belong to the age group of 55 to 64 years while 10.3% belong to the age group of 26 to 34 years.

The designation of the respondents cut across different cadres: Library Portal - 6.9%, Assistant Librarian - 10.3%, Higher Library Officer - 3.4%, Librarian II - 10.3%, Librarian I - 31.0, Senior Librarian - 20.7%, Principal Librarian - 10.3%, Assistant Chief Librarian 3.4%, and Chief Librarian 3.4%.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**1. Have Nigerian libraries adopted exhibition for marketing of their collections and services?**

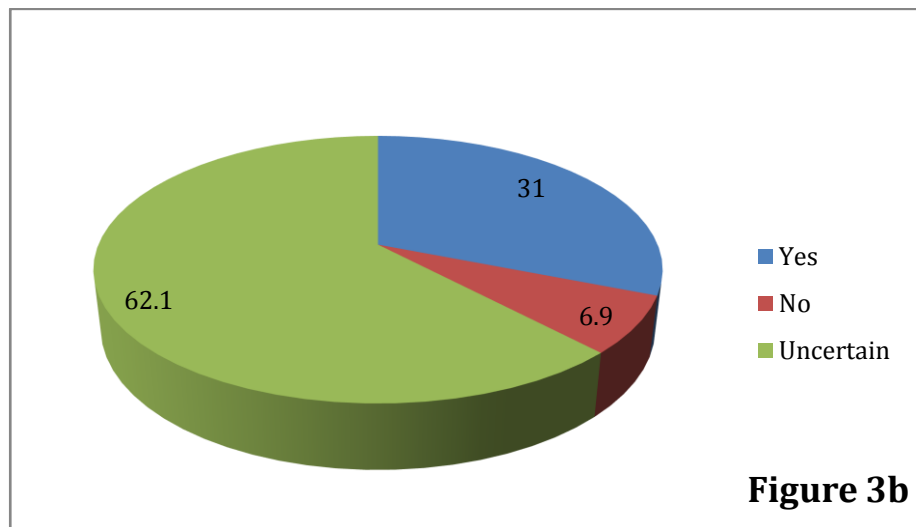
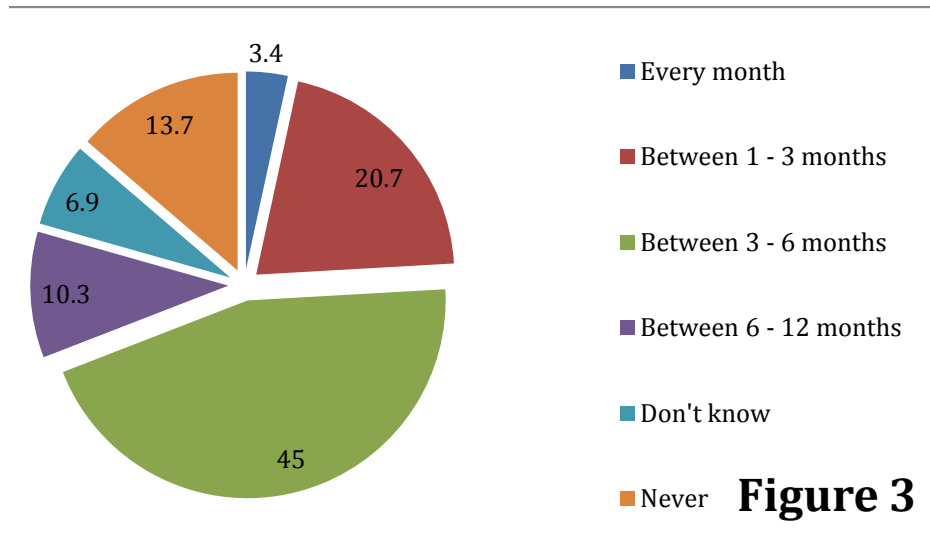
Figure 1 reveals that 62.1% of Nigerian libraries have adopted exhibition for marketing of their collections and services while 37.9% yet to.

**2. What methods of exhibition are adopted by Nigeria libraries? (Physical, Online or both)**

The findings revealed that 89.7% of libraries hold exhibition. The Figure 2 shows that majority 69% of libraries hold physical exhibition, 13.8 of Nigerian libraries hold both online and physical, 6.9% hold online while only 10.3% are yet to engage in any form of exhibition.

**3. How often do exhibition activities take place in Nigerian libraries?**

Figure 3 shows that exhibition activities take place at different intervals in Nigerian libraries. Exhibition is held in the following intervals by Nigerian libraries every month 3.4%, 1 – 3 months 20.7%, 3 – 6 months 45%, 6 – months 10.3% while 6.9% could not give specific frequency of exhibition activities in their libraries and 13.7% are yet to adopt exhibition as a method of advertising their library services and collections.



**3b: Is there any possibility of holding displays and exhibitions next year?**

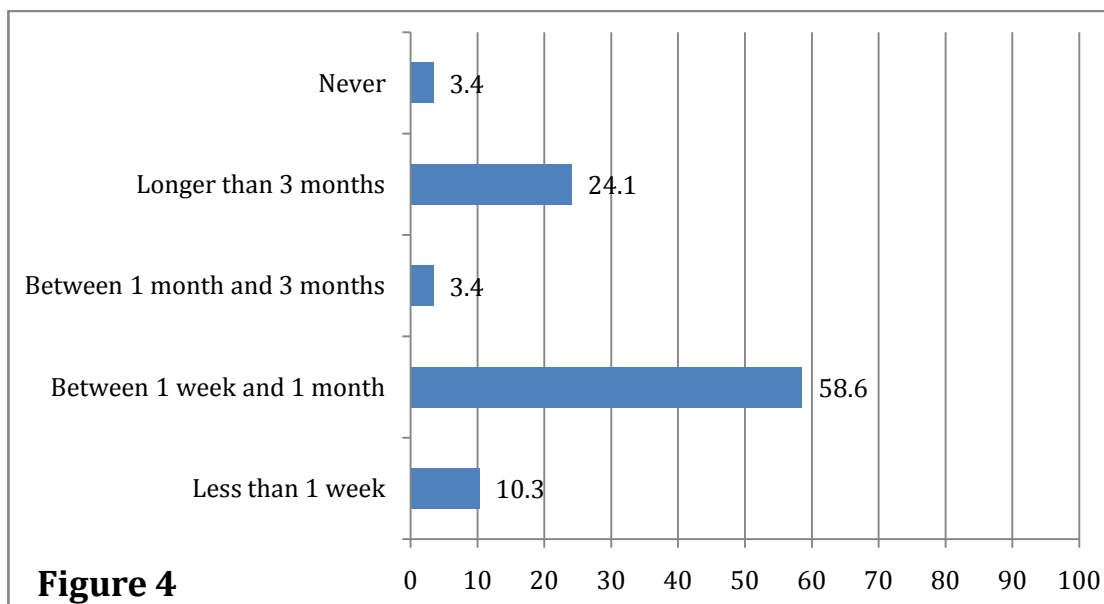
Figure 3b above reveals that 62.1% of the respondents indicated that they were uncertain of the possibility of holding exhibition next year, 31% pointed out that there is possibility while 6.9% confirmed that there was no possibility of holding exhibition in the forthcoming year.

**4: How long does an exhibition programme last?**

Figure 4 shows the duration of library exhibition activities. A greater percentage of the respondents, 10.3% revealed that exhibition usually last for less than 1 week, 58.6%

between 1 week to a month, 3.4% between 1 month to 3 month, 24.1% longer than 3 months while those yet to adopt exhibition were 3.4%.

Table 2 above reveals that all the respondents indicated that the purpose of exhibition is to educate library users on the available resources (100.0%); creates awareness about information sources and services in the library (100.0%) and increases aesthetic sense and knowledge of patrons (100.0%). This findings is in corroboration with Williams (2011) who indicated that exhibitions serve the purpose of highlighting particular collections which may ordinarily not be seen and allow people to discover the services rendered by the library or information centre. 96.6% of respondents opted for



**Table 2:** What is the purpose of exhibition?

Purpose	Disagree		Agree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Promotion of collection(s)	1	3.4	28	96.6	29	100.0
Promotion of library service	1	3.4	28	96.6	29	100.0
Community outreach	3	10.3	26	89.7	29	100.0
Educating library user on the available resources	0	0.0	29	100.0	29	100.0
Provoke reading and thought	3	10.3	26	89.7	29	100.0
Creates awareness about information sources and services in the library.	0	0.0	29	100.0	29	100.0
Creates a positive attitude for the library as an important asset of the university in the pursuance of its objectives.	1	3.4	28	96.6	29	100.0
Increases aesthetic sense and knowledge of patrons	0	0.0	29	100.0	29	100.0

promotion of collections, promotion of library services and to create a positive attitude for the library as an important asset of the university in the pursuance of its objectives respectively while 89.7% opted for community outreach and provoking reading and thought.

Table 3 reveals the barriers to effective use of exhibition by libraries in Nigeria. The common inhibitors identified were lack of exhibition guidelines, lack of exhibition and display equipment and materials needed for mounting exhibitions (96.6%); this means that there is no specific guidelines for exhibition in Nigerian libraries and equipment for exhibition are lacking. It was also showed that some of the respondents (93.1%) considered lack of former training on exhibits for

librarians from library school as a major barrier; this shows that Nigerian library schools have not integrated exhibition as part of the courses into to their curriculum. 86.2% of respondents showed that lack of trained exhibition librarians to occupy official positions in libraries is another inhibitor; this implies that there is no specific official position for exhibits librarian in Nigerian libraries. 82.8% identified lack of resources – money, space, display furniture etc as another inhibitor. 85.1% by the respondents indicated proliferation of electronic resources which is now a major threat to physical exhibition as another inhibitor; this shows that Nigerian libraries dwell more on physical exhibition and not alongside with online exhibition. Also 75.8% of the

**Table 3:** What are the problems militating against exhibition activities in Nigerian libraries?

Problems	Disagree		Agree		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Lack of exhibition and display equipment and materials needed for mounting exhibitions	1	3.4	28	96.6	29	100.0
Electronic resources is posing a big threat to physical exhibition	5	14.9	24	85.1	29	100.0
Lack of creative exhibits librarian	8	27.6	21	72.4	29	100.0
Lack of former training of exhibits librarians from library school	2	6.9	25	93.1	29	100.0
Lack of trained exhibits librarians to occupy official positions in libraries	4	13.8	25	86.2	29	100.0
Library is depending on university IT personnel and has resulted to lack of website administrator to oversee online exhibition and display	9	31.0	20	69.0	29	100.0
Financial constrain	7	24.1	22	75.8	29	100.0
Lack of materials for exhibition (both online and physical exhibition)	13	44.8	16	55.2	29	100.0
Lack of resources – money, space, display furniture etc	5	17.2	24	82.8	29	100.0

respondents agreed that financial constrain was another constraint also 69.0% to lack of IT personnel website or administrator to oversee online exhibition and display was also identified. While lack of creative exhibits librarian was suggested as a limitation by 72.4% of respondents; this means that creative exhibits librarians are lacking and seriously needed in Nigerian libraries. The least inhibitor as identified by 55.2% of the respondents was lack of materials for exhibition (both online and physical exhibition).

## DISCUSSION

Findings from the study revealed that Nigerian libraries were currently engaged in exhibition. This shows how proactive Nigerian libraries are as their activities are directed towards stimulating users' interest and satisfying their targeted clientele to achieve the organisation's goals which is what exhibition aims to achieve. In the same vein, Saliu and Abdullssalam (2014) posited that exhibition and display draws the attention of library users to the services rendered, stimulate readers' interest on a particular area of interest to the community. Though Nigerian libraries are currently engaged in exhibition and display, however, findings of this study also revealed that majority of Nigerian libraries were uncertain of possibility of holding exhibition in next year. This shows there was no elaborate planning for exhibition and displays in Nigerian libraries. This opposed the principles that governed library services. That is why Aina (2004) put

forward that an elaborate planning is required so as to ensure that the overall objectives of a library are attained.

The findings further revealed that the major method of library exhibition by Nigerian libraries is physical exhibition. This implies that Nigerian libraries were still marketing library services in only old-fashioned way. Meanwhile the range of services that take place outside the physical library is expanding due to the new technology, and it is likely to expand further (Gupta and Savard, 2010). Libraries that are becoming obsolete are those that have failed to embrace new marketing approaches in reaching their clientele. It has therefore become very expedient for Nigerian libraries to embrace modern marketing strategies by adding online exhibition to physical exhibition by deploying modern tools such as library website, cloud computing services, blogs, social networking sites. Also Fernandez (2009) supported that social networking sites provide a forum where libraries can create an online presence and spread awareness about their services. This enables libraries to reach out to patrons in the world of Web 2.0, a virtual world that many patrons already inhabit with ease.

The study showed that Nigerian libraries exhibition and displays are held frequently between 3 – 6 months and the duration lasted between a week to a month. Libraries persistent in exhibition exercise will promote library services and collections. This finding seem to agree with Gupta and Savard (2010) who speculated that it has been widely admitted that libraries and archives have for a very long time suffered from their image and visibility problems. This is probably why many librarians now see

marketing as a very important tool, promotional strategies, to constantly promote, educate, guide and make library more attractive to users, as the philosophy of library is to constantly meet the changing information needs of its users. Bhatt (2011) submitted that it is imperative to ensure library patrons use the materials we select and purchase for them; 'this can be achieved through constant exhibitions and display either in physical form or online'.

Nigerian libraries use exhibition and display to educate library users on the available resources; create awareness about information sources and services in the library; increases aesthetic sense and knowledge of patrons. This findings is in corroboration with Williams (2011) who reiterated that exhibitions serve the purpose of highlighting particular collections which may ordinarily not be seen and allow people to discover the service exists. Chadbourne (1976) proposes exhibitions in the library can offer a place of escape for the researcher, something to do whilst taking a break. The University of Canterbury Library (2014) has identified exhibitions are a powerful alternative medium by which the Library can facilitate access to information and knowledge while also providing an environment conducive to learning. The Library has identified increasing demand for relaxing areas for recreational reading, and space and facilities for exhibitions and events.

The study found a number of factors hindering exhibition and display activities, major constrains identified are lack of exhibition guidelines for use by exhibitors and lack of exhibition and display equipment and materials needed for mounting exhibitions. This finding concurred with Arachchige (2002) who reported that library's strength is generally determined on the basis of its resource collection, equipment, staff, technology, investment capability, and the managerial process of the library.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Nigerian libraries have embraced physical exhibition but have not fully explore the Internet for online exhibition and displays. Policy on Exhibition and displays need to be developed, formal training need to be organised to equip exhibits librarian and enough funds should be released to the libraries to enable Nigerian libraries procure necessary physical or online exhibition and displays equipment. This will no doubt help Nigerian libraries woo more customers and stimulate clientele interest in reading.

## CONCLUSION

Exhibition, be it physical or online, is an indispensable

part of library operations. This is because the essence of acquiring, processing and storing of library collections (both hard and soft copies) is use. It therefore becomes imperative for all Nigerian libraries to embrace exhibition and display in order to arouse clientele's yearning for the use of library and its resources resulting to increase in readership.

## REFERENCES

- Aina (2004). Library and Information Science Text for Africa. Third World Information Services, 365 pages
- Arachchige JJG (2002). An approach to marketing in special and academic libraries of Sri Lanka: a survey with emphasis on services provided to the clientele. Available at <http://eprints.rclis.org/6731/> Accessed January 9, 2015.
- Bhatt RK (2011). Relevance of Ranganathan's Laws of Library Science in Library Marketing *Library Philosophy and Practice* (2011) 7 p. Available at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/551/> Accessed on January 9, 2015.
- Chadbourne ES (1976). Library Administration of Historical Materials: Exhibits. *Law Library Journal*. 69, 321-325. Available at <http://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?collection=journals&handle=hein.journals/lj69&id=335> Accessed: 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2013
- Cleeve M (1995). Taking a stand: the market realities of exhibition and display work. *Librarian Career Development*. 3 (1), 31-35. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09680819510076659> Accessed: 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2013
- Fernandez P (2009). Online Social Networking Sites and Privacy: Revisiting Ethical Considerations for a New Generation of Technology. *Library Philosophy and Practice* 2009 (March)
- Giuliano SJ (2009). We have books and computers: libraries and the importance of marketing. *Library Student Journal*. [online]. June 2009. Available at <http://www.librarystudentjournal.org/index.php/ljsj/article/view/98/223> Accessed: 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov 2013
- Gupta DK, Savard R (2010). Marketing Library and Information Services. *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Sciences*, Third Edition. Taylor & Francis. 3553 – 3560 p.
- Kumar, Rajashekhar D. (2004). The Importance of Marketing and Total Quality Management in Libraries. *Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship*, vol. 5 no. 2-3. Available at [http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/content/v05n02/kumar\\_r01.htm](http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/content/v05n02/kumar_r01.htm) Accessed: January 9, 2015
- Saliu UA, Abdullssalam TAB (2014) Circulation Procedures and the Functions of Circulation Unit in Nigerian University Libraries: A Case Study of



University of Ilorin Library. 17(1):129-142. Available at <https://www.unilorin.edu.ng/ejournals/index.php/cp/article/download/854/456> Accessed: March 17, 2015.

Schaeffer M (1991). *Library displays handbook*. New York: H. W. Wilson

Schmidt J (2007). Promoting Library Services in a Google World. *Library Management*. 28 (6/7), 337-346. Available at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/01435120710774477> < >  
Accessed: 28th April 2014

University of Canterbury Library (2014) UC Policy Library: Library Exhibition Policy and Procedures, September 2014.

Available at

<http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/ucpolicy/GetPolicy.aspx?file=Library-Exhibition-Policy-And-Procedures.pdf>

Accessed January 9, 2015

Velarde G (2001). *Designing Exhibitions: Museums, Heritage, Trade and World Fairs*. 2nd ed. Aldershot; Burlington: Ashgate.

Williams L (2011). Exhibitions in libraries: the role of the information professional. A study submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in librarianship at the University of Sheffield.