

The Role Of The Academic Library In Providing Outreach Services To Prison Inmates By Means Of Mobile Tools And Technologies

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Introduction

- Everybody needs information to survive irrespective of social status, age, disabilities, literacy level and gender.
- The academic library has the primary role of providing library and information services to the university in which it is situated.
- Information provision through outreach services is usually done in consideration to the nature of the target population as well as the nature of resources more appropriate for their use.
- Prison inmates specifically need information as a result of their exclusion from the regular information sources and channels available in a free world.



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Justification

- Practically, the study is intended to be significant and useful to the following:
 - **Students and researchers** – will identify the need and relevance of outreach services as offered by the academic library for the prison inmates;
 - **The librarian and the lecturer** - will benefit from this study as it will enhance their understanding and perspective of outreach services especially as it pertains the use of mobile tools and technologies in the service delivery;
 - For **policy makers and administrators** - this study will enable them make policies that will be in line with the attainment of the institutional objectives usually enshrined in her mission and vision.



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Research questions

- **Main research question:**

To find out the role of the academic library in providing outreach services to prison inmates by means of mobile tools and technologies.



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Specific Research Questions

- What are the outreach services provided to the prison inmates by means of mobile tools and technologies?.
- What are the mobile tools and technologies used for the provision of outreach services to prison inmates?
- What are the benefits of outreach services to prison inmates as provided by the academic library with mobile tools and technologies?
- What are the problems encountered in the provision of outreach services to prison inmates by means of mobile tools and technologies?
- What are the strategies for enhancing outreach services to prison inmates by means of mobile tools and technologies?



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Working Definitions

- **Outreach services** also referred to as extension services involve series of programmes and activities designed to reach out to people and groups who have no immediate access to information and its resources in their locations.
- **Mobile tools and technologies** include mobile and electronic devices such as phones, computers, networks, etc.
- Primarily, an **academic library** is designed to support the teaching, learning and research activities of the university (or other institutions of higher learning) in which it is situated.
- **Prison inmates** are those who have been confined to prison environment as a result of crime or awaiting trial for an offence or crime committed



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Literature review

- The literature was reviewed under the following headings:
 - Outreach Services
 - The Academic Library
 - The Prison Library
 - The Prison Inmates
 - Mobile Tools and Technologies
 - Problems of Outreach Services to Prison Inmates
 - Strategies for Enhancing Outreach Services for the Prison inmates.
- Evidence from literature reviewed indicates that no known study has been carried out on this research topic thus the need to find out the roles of the academic library in providing outreach services to prison inmates by means of mobile tools and technologies.



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Research approach

- This study adopted the qualitative inquiry approach for the purposes and procedures for the research.
- Creswell (2013) identified five qualitative research approaches which include narrative enquiry-based, case study, phenomenology (survey), grounded theory and the ethnography.
- The qualitative approach employs the use of questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observation to generate responses.
- This approach is suitable for the current study because the population of study is relatively small and interpretation is based on a combination of researcher's perspective on the existing phenomenon and the corresponding data collection.



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Research strategy

- The research adopted the **descriptive survey** strategy.
- A descriptive survey design intends to investigate and obtain facts on an existing phenomenon.
- The strategy is appropriate for the study because it intends to elicit information from a target population (prison inmates) through the provision of information services by the academic library using mobile tools and technologies.
- It is thus aimed at describing the events (outreach services) as they were in the prison library.



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Methodology

- Since research is a systematic inquiry into an unknown, research methodology is a systematic empirical procedure which the researcher uses to solve an identified problem.
- This is often presented in steps, strategies and procedures in order to generate objectives, unbiased responses and findings.
- The methodology employed in this research is therefore arranged under the following headings –
 - research design,
 - research approach,
 - research strategy,
 - research location,
 - target population, sample and sampling technique,
 - data collection instruments, and
 - method of data analysis.



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Research location

- The location/area covered by this study is **Nsukka**, Enugu State in South East geo-political zone of Nigeria.
- It is a semi-literate, semi-urban densely populated town in which Nigeria's first indigenous university (University of Nigeria, Nsukka) is situated.
- Although situated near the university, the inhabitants are predominantly farmers and traders with the exception of university staff and students who have emigrated to this location basically for academic purposes.
- It is in this area that the Nsukka prison is located.



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Population and Sampling

- ☐ The population of the study is in two folds.
- ☐ The first group consist of **academic librarians** (12) and the lecturers (8) in the academic library. The second group are the Prison inmates.
- ☐ The **prison inmates** are 309 in number (although this number constantly vary as a result of either admittance of new inmates, acquittal or sentence).
- ☐ Out of the 309 inmates, 287 are **awaiting trial** while 22 are **convicted**.
- ☐ 55 prison inmates consisting of registered library users are purposely sampled.



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Instruments

- ▣ For data collection, a structured questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion were used.

- The **questionnaire** was used to generate responses from the academic librarians and lecturers.

The questionnaire was arranged in clusters and sections respectively, and in line with the specific research questions.

- **Focus group discussion** was used to generate responses from the prison inmates.



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Data collection

- Data was collected by administering the questionnaires to the librarians and lecturers who provides the outreach services.

- The researcher used focus group discussion to obtain responses from the prison inmates .

- The focus group interview focused on the information resources (mobile tools and technologies) used by the academic library in providing outreach services to them.

- These are structured in line with the research questions.



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Data analysis

- Data generated from the questionnaire was analyzed using **percentages and mean**.
- The results were presented in tabular form in line with the research questions.
- Frequencies of responses was used to calculate the mean using the 4 point rating style.
- Percentages was used to analyse Research Question 1 which has polar responses.
- Findings from focus group discussion was presented in narratives, tables and charts.
- It was used to compare the data obtained from the questionnaire.



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Ethical considerations

- ☐ As a result of the researcher's interference into the personal lives and privacy of the respondents, some ethical considerations were taken into account namely – **faculty approval** and **informed consent**:
- The researcher received approval from the Faculty Committee for Research, Ethics and Integrity in the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and Information Technology, University of Pretoria. The research instruments were also verified and approved.
- The respondents were made to understand the objectives of the study. They were therefore given the opportunity to decide whether they want to participate or decline to participate in the research.



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Major Findings

- Outreach services are provided to the prison inmates by the academic library.
- Mobile tools and technologies are being introduced to the delivery of outreach services in the prison library.
- There are moderations on the use of mobile devices to provide outreach services to the inmates, thus the inmates could only use the devices in the prison library with close supervision from prison wardens and librarians.
- Although not fully implemented, the prison inmates support the delivery of outreach services to them by means of mobile tools and technologies.



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Major findings (cont'd)

- Outreach services has benefited and improved the academic, emotional and psychological development of the inmates.
- The prison authority/administration permits the academic librarian's provision of outreach services to the prison inmates.
- Inadequate fund, personnel and mobile tools forms the major part of the problems in the delivery of outreach services to the inmates.
- Outreach services may be enhanced through the provision of mobile tools and technologies.
- By extension, outreach services is expected to improve the overall condition of the inmates.



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Recommendations

- Librarians, especially the academic (and public library) should be encouraged to undertake outreach services to the prison inmates
- There should be provision of book and non-book resources in the provision of outreach services.
- The prison authorities should also consider policies that will be compliant with the global best practices in her service delivery.
- Information should be provided for all irrespective of social status, gender, level of education, location, and other barriers.
- The academic library should consider the integration of other literacy programs such as workshops, seminars, symposia and conferences in the provision of outreach services.



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Recommendations (cont'd)

- The prison inmates should be trained and re-trained on the use of the library and library skills, especially in order to avert their delinquent use of the library.
- The academic librarian should be trained on the improved use of mobile devices in order to meet the growing technological information needs of the inmates.
- The university administration through the library should make policies that will favour the prison inmates and other disadvantaged groups especially in the provision of outreach and information literacy services.
- Distance Learning and other basic and higher education programs should be integrated in the outreach program in order to improve the literacy level of the illiterate inmates.



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Appreciation

- ▣ Big thanks to:
 - ✓ Carnegie Corporation of New York
 - ✓ University of Pretoria.
 - ✓ Prof. Theo Bothma,
 - ✓ Drs. Marlene Holmner and Ceceilia Penzhorn
 - ✓ The entire CPD and MIT staff.
 - ✓ Family, colleagues and friends.



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