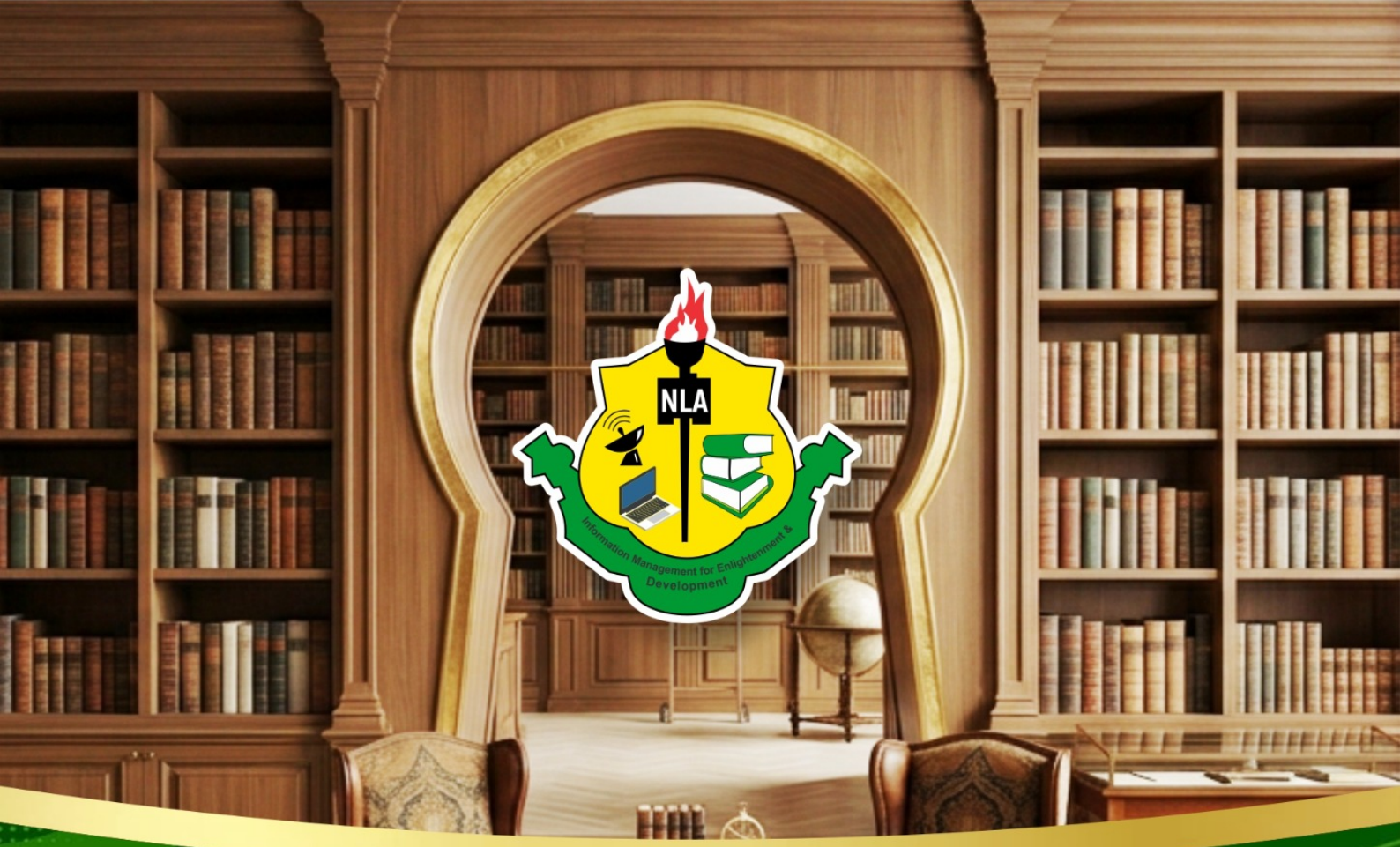

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 64TH NIGERIAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE ON OUR FUTURE, OUR HOPE: THE STATE OF LIBRARIES AND LIBRARIANSHIP IN NIGERIA.

MINNA 2026: 12TH - 17TH JULY

VOL. 1

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ISBN:978-978-48760-0-1

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Published by
Jopa Digital Publications
Nh1 Lagos Street By Muri Kaduna
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Preface

The global information ecosystem is undergoing a profound revolution. Driven by rapid technological disruption, changing user demographics, and shifting socio-economic realities, the traditional boundaries of the library have dissolved. Today, libraries are no longer mere storehouses of books; they are dynamic innovation hubs, centers for community empowerment, and the vital infrastructure upon which the knowledge economy is built.

For centuries, libraries have served as the custodian of knowledge, the arbiters of information, and the vibrant hubs of community engagement. From the scrolls of Alexandria to the digital repositories of today, their fundamental mission has remained constant: to connect people with the information they need to learn, grow, and thrive. But as the 5th Industrial Revolution gather pace, the very definition of "information" and "service" is undergoing a radical re-evaluation in library and information profession. In response to the above, the Nigerian Library Association hosts her 64rd National Conference at Minna, Niger State from 12th to 17th July, 2026 culminating in this landmark two-volume book of proceedings with the Theme *"Our Future, Our Hope: The State of Libraries and Librarianship in Nigeria"*. It is a theme that is considered very apt in the face of rising competitiveness in the information market and the quest for professional identity and relevance among library and information professionals in Nigeria. This collection stands as a testament to the resilience, adaptability, and intellectual vigor of Nigerian information professionals at a defining moment in our history.

This book is an invitation to librarians, information professionals, educators, policymakers, and indeed, anyone invested in the future of knowledge, creation, access, and use to contemplate the profound implications of this new era. The proceedings provide a comprehensive reflection on contemporary developments, emerging trends, persistent challenges, and future directions for libraries and librarianship in Nigeria. It has also encouraged scholarly engagement with strategies for building resilient, innovative, and inclusive library systems. Collectively, the papers demonstrate that although libraries in Nigeria continue to face challenges associated with funding, infrastructure, technology adoption, policy implementation, and human capacity development, there are numerous opportunities for renewal through research, innovation, strategic partnerships, and professional collaboration.

The conference tagged "Minna 2026", attracted 292 papers on the various sub-themes of the conference theme. Each submission was reviewed by selected experts/professionals in the relevant areas of Librarianship and Information Science. After each paper was subjected to scrutiny by the reviewers, 220 papers were selected and presented at the Conference. The selected papers were assembled in this book of proceedings. The contributions span diverse thematic areas, including Artificial Intelligence and emerging technologies in libraries, the state and of school libraries, public library development in Nigeria, academic and special library services, information and knowledge management, digital preservation, information literacy, collection development, professional ethics, capacity building, library and information science education and the role of professional associations in promoting excellence and sustainability within the library profession. These themes underscore the multidisciplinary nature of Library and Information Science and highlight the evolving responsibilities of libraries in supporting education, research, innovation, lifelong learning, and national development.

We specially thank the participants of the 64th NLA National Conference 2026, for their unalloyed cooperation, loyalty, support and contributions over the years. Gratitude is also extended to the reviewers for their valuable time, expertise, and constructive evaluations, which ensured the academic quality and integrity of the published papers. Their collective efforts have contributed significantly to the success of this publication.

It is hoped that these proceedings will serve as an important resource for researchers, librarians, educators, students, policymakers, and other stakeholders in the information sector. Beyond documenting the scholarly contributions presented at the conference, the volumes are expected to stimulate further research, encourage professional dialogue, inform policy development, and inspire innovative practices that will strengthen libraries and librarianship in Nigeria and beyond

Dr. Juliet C. Alex-Nmecha
Vice President & Chairman, National Organizing Committee

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UTILIZATION OF HEALTH INFORMATION RESOURCES AND SERVICES FOR CLINICAL DECISION-MAKING AMONG HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS IN USMANU DANFODIYO UNIVERSITY TEACHING HOSPITAL SOKOTO, NIGERIA - Sylvia Sylvester JELANI BLS MLS CLN, Abdulmuta'all Oyedeji ABDULKADIR BLS & Romoke Opeyemi QUADIR BLS, MLS, PhD, PCCN CLN **850**

LIBRARIANS' KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS OF THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY IN PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC RULE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined librarians' knowledge and awareness of the role of public libraries in promoting democratic rule in Nigeria, with specific attention to librarians' understanding of democratic responsibilities, the services currently available to support democracy, the challenges limiting effective engagement, and strategies for improvement. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data were collected through a researcher-designed online questionnaire administered to 36 librarians drawn from Public Libraries in Nigeria. Data were analysed using frequency counts and percentages, while open-ended responses were interpreted contextually. The study found that librarians are broadly aware of the democratic roles of public libraries, particularly traditional functions such as supplementing formal education and providing equal access to information. However, democratic programming including civic education, community conversations, and information fact-checking, remains inconsistent or absent across libraries. Practical implementation is constrained by unreliable electricity, lack of internet connectivity, inadequate funding, political interference, and insufficient professional training. The study concludes that strengthening public libraries through improved infrastructure, targeted funding, professional development, and supportive policy frameworks is essential if libraries are to function effectively as democratic institutions in Nigeria. These findings are significant given Nigeria's persistent challenges of voter apathy, electoral malpractice, and political misinformation, which underline the urgent need for well-resourced public libraries as instruments of democratic empowerment.

Keywords: Public libraries, Democracy, Democratic Rule, Governance, Misinformation

Introduction

Democracy is a form of government in which power resides in the people through their elected representatives. The values of freedom, respect for human rights, and the principle of holding elections by universal suffrage are essential elements of democracy. Information and informed participation are vital to an effective democracy to thrive. To safeguard democracy, governments establish institutions such as public libraries to maintain trust between the government and the people, protect intellectual freedom, provide open and equal access to information for all citizens, and promote civic education. Public libraries are also established to supplement formal education, fight censorship, forge a sense of community among the diverse population of a country, provide space for public engagement and facilitate discussion on topical issues affecting the citizens (Rasmussen and Hakon, 2025). By actively promoting civic and providing resources and opportunities for civic engagement, libraries can empower citizens to become informed, active and responsible participants in democracy, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant and inclusive society.

In countries where the public library is functioning effectively, the libraries have programs through which citizen are closely aligned to government policies. The citizens have feelings of being part of the polity, and they know their rights and exercise them as appropriate. In such countries, political choices are based on ideologies not ethnic lines. The people value government properties and strive to protect them. Countries such as these include the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), and South Africa (SA). In USA, the American Library Association has many slogans to showcase the relationship between the American libraries, the citizens, and their government (democracy). There are slogans such as "Libraries Sustain Democracy" and "Libraries Transforming Communities". There are also case studies of Library activities to promote democracy (Hummel, 2022). In the UK, the public libraries are well patronized by the citizens. The libraries lead conversations to encourage exchange of ideas through a variety of means, including hosting community reads, book clubs, and panel discussions (Keiva, 2020). Lynch (2025) observed that funding and staff cuts are impacting libraries' roles in fostering democracy. In pursuance of the library's democracy role, a librarian, Patrick Malone, secured funding for an 18-month democracy project.

However, in African countries, not much is known about how public libraries in different African countries strive to promote democracy. In Nigeria, the widespread election malpractice, voter apathy, and political parties aligned more closely to ethnic lines since the inception of the fourth republic, calls to question the role of public libraries in democracy. Moreover, a lack of known library activities designated for promoting democracy paints the picture that libraries in Nigeria does not engage in democracy promotion projects. It is therefore important to find out if Libraries in Nigeria are aware of the role of the library in promoting democratic rule

Statement of the Problem

Public libraries promote democracy by making information resources available to users. Through these information resources, the users gain insight into the workings of their government and their rights as citizens. The libraries organize public engagement programs to educate the masses on topical governance issues and provide spaces for public engagement. In the developed world, such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom, public library programs to support democracy are highly visible. However, in Nigeria, the situation is not the same. There are no programs specifically designed to support democracy (Umar & Tokawa, 2024). Moreover, the high level of voter apathy and malpractices that marked elections since the fourth republic in a country with at least a state library in every state and national libraries in more than three-quarters of the states creates the impression that public librarians are not performing their responsibilities towards the masses as it concerns democracy. This leaves one to wonder whether public librarians are aware of their responsibilities to the public. It is based on this that this study sets out to examine librarians' knowledge and awareness of the role of public libraries in promoting democracy in Nigeria.

Research Objective

The general objective of this study is to investigate the Librarians' knowledge and awareness of the role of the public library in promoting democratic rule in Nigeria. Specifically, the study will:

i. Investigate the Nigerian public librarians' awareness of the use of library services in promoting democratic rule.
ii. Ascertain the services available in Nigerian public libraries to promote democracy.
iii. Investigate the challenges of Nigerian public libraries in promoting democratic rule.
iv. Suggest strategies to enhance public libraries role in promoting democratic rule using library services.

Review of Related Literature

Review of relevant literature was presented in line with the objectives of the study, as shown below:

Public librarians' awareness of the role of public libraries in promoting democratic rule.

The knowledge of Public librarians on the role of public libraries in promoting democratic rule is paramount because one cannot effectively deliver services he/she is not aware of. Studies have consistently shown that the level of awareness and understanding of the public library concept by the Nigerian community is poor (Adesanya & Okonkwo, 2020). This lack of awareness undermines the potential of public libraries to serve as instruments for democratic empowerment.

For libraries to achieve its goal of promoting democratic rule in any given nation, the libraries must acquaint themselves with their core duties. Ephraim-Emmanuel, Odikeme, Ugwoke, & Owede (2021), observed that many citizens are ignorant of the services provided by the public libraries, especially as it relates to democratic participation and civic education. Low level of awareness hinders the value of libraries in supporting electoral participation and informed citizenship (Ezeani & Nwabueze, 2022). However, in a society where there is an increased awareness, libraries supports political knowledge and civic engagement significantly amongst its users (Okafor & Eze, 2024).

Services available in Public Libraries in Nigeria to promote democracy

Public libraries contribute to the democratic rule by disseminating information resources that facilitate informed decision-making. The libraries ensure that information related to governance is accessible to citizens, thereby supporting the culture of transparency and accountability (Okafor & Eze, 2024; Veillette, 2024). Audunson (2023) also observed that library is a public dialogue or discourse platform that enables citizens to discuss both social and political issues. Ezeani & Nwabueze (2022) observed that public libraries are instruments for democracy sustenance. Libraries sustain democracy through civic awareness and information-sharing services. Bannon (2022) identified three dimensions through which libraries facilitate democratic engagement. These are civic knowledge, civic attitudes, and civic action. The research revealed that public libraries offer complimentary access to books, magazines, newspapers, and online resources that assist individuals in remaining informed about contemporary events and comprehending intricate matters. Alemna (2024) added that the public libraries facilitate democratic values by encouraging political participation in governance through the organization of public awareness campaign programmes like workshops, conferences, voters education programmes, community outreach initiatives. Yap, Barat, and Kiszl (2024), in a scoping review of the civic roles of libraries in combating information disorders in social media, observed that libraries are cultural institutions that represent the public sphere. The authors submitted that the library provides equal access to information, thereby giving

citizens opportunity to participate adequately in the political , social and economic aspects of their daily lives. Their study also added that the cornerstone of democratic practice, which is civic engagement, is directly linked to social capital. They pointed that libraries, as trusted institutions, help to build this social capital by offering neutral spaces for dialogue, learning, and community engagement (Yap, Barat, and Kiszl (2024). Promoting electoral participation by libraries is further enhanced by the creation of political dialogue spaces, engagement of electoral candidates in public debates, and other public engagements programmes like town hall meetings. In a piece published in The Library Quarterly, Kranich (2024) makes the case that in order to enable citizens to become civic agents who jointly shape their future, librarians must collaborate with other advocates of civic literacy. Jonsson (2025), and Veillette (2024) in their own views opine that libraries promote political literacy, as well as empowering citizens or electorates to actively participate in democratic processes. Furthermore, libraries promote digital inclusion by creating platforms that allows citizens to participate and engage actively (PressReader, 2024).

Challenges of Public Libraries in Promoting Democratic Rule

Irrespective of the role of libraries in promoting democracy in Nigeria, public libraries are faced with challenges that hinders them from effectively promoting democracy in Nigeria. Among these problems are lack of modern equipment and learning resources. Ezeani & Nwabueze (2022) noted that some of the challenges hindering libraries from maximizing their power as a social institution to promote democracy are poor infrastructure, inadequate funding, limited access to current and relevant information materials. Ephraim-Emmanuel, Odikeme, Ugwoke, & Owede (2021) added other challenges to include, lack of trained personnel, low awareness of library services, and limited integration of digital technologies. Alemna (2024) also observed political interference and lack of policy support as factors militating against the effectiveness of libraries in functioning as independent democratic institution. Okafor & Eze (2024) also noted that socio-economic factors like low literacy level and poverty affects the use of library and citizen's participation in a democratic system of government. Insufficient funding is arguably the most prevalent challenge facing Nigerian public libraries. Osuchukwu, Obuezie, and Ogwuche (2022) found that the average yearly budget for a state library in Nigeria is about 3.5 million Naira (about 8,300 USD), and most of that money goes to paying staff salaries. As a result of this, a lot of libraries do not have computers, software licenses, or high-speed internet connectivity. These problems hinder libraries from offering the digital and information services that are needed for people to take part in civic activities.

Strategies to enhance public libraries role in promoting democratic rule

There are various strategies through which public libraries can promote democracy. These strategies include programmatic, technological, policy, and partnership-based approaches, and they can be used in many different countries, including Nigeria, which has a democratic government. IFLA (2024) noted the following strategies: an improved library funding, investing in the library infrastructure, and digital technologies. In addition to the IFLA strategies, Alemna (2024) added the capacity building of librarians as a vital aspect to equip them with the technical know-how or prerequisite skills required to support civic education and digital literacy. PreeReader (2024) also noted the need to strengthen partnerships between libraries, civil society organisations, and government agencies to promote impact and improve outreach. Ephraim-Emmanuel, Odikeme, Ugwoke, & Owede (2021) observed another critical strategy to include the promotion of awareness of library services through advocacy and community engagement programmes. Developing policies that recognize libraries as a vital democratic institution will promote their role in promoting democracy and citizen participation in electoral processes (Jansson, 2025).

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to investigate librarians' knowledge and awareness of the role of public libraries in promoting democratic governance in Nigeria. The population of the study comprised thirty-six (36) public librarians. These librarians were selected purposively from the headquarters of state libraries in Nigeria, one librarian from each state headquarters. The Librarians were selected based on their positions as public services/outreach librarians. Data were collected using a researcher-designed structured questionnaire administered online through Google Forms over four weeks. The selected librarians' attention was called to the online form through emails and WhatsApp chats. The questionnaire consisted of two sections. Section A, captured respondents' demographic information, while Section B contained closed-ended items rated on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree) and a set of open-ended questions. The closed-ended items measured librarians' awareness of democratic roles, availability of democratic services, and perceptions of challenges, while the open-ended questions invited respondents to suggest improvement strategies. Data from the closed-ended items were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores, while open-ended responses were analyzed thematically to complement the quantitative findings.

Data Presentation and Results

Objective 1: Librarians' Awareness of the Role of the Public Library in Promoting Democratic Rule

Table 1: Librarians' Awareness of the Democratic Roles of Public Libraries (n=36)

Item	Strongly Agree n(%)	Agree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Strongly Disagree n(%)	Mean Score
Supplement formal education	24(66.7)	12(33.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3.67 (Strongly Agree)
Provide civic education	18(50.0)	18(16.7)	2(33.3)	0(0.0)	3.17 (Agree)
Provide equal access to information	30(83.3)	6(16.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3.83 (Strongly Agree)
Fight censorship	24(66.7)	0(0.0)	12(33.3)	0(0.0)	3.33 (Agree)
Craft a sense of community among diverse population	30(83.3)	6(16.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3.83 (Strongly Agree)
Provide space for public discussions	30(83.3)	6(16.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3.83 (Strongly Agree)

The data in Table 1 paint a generally encouraging picture of awareness, but with some notable inconsistencies worth attending to. Regarding supplementing formal education, all thirty-six respondents either strongly agreed (66.7%) or agreed (33.3%) that public libraries serve this function. The response pattern for equal access to information was similarly strong, with 83.3% of respondents strongly agreeing and 16.7% agreeing. The awareness of libraries as spaces for community building and public discussion was equally high. Both items received strong agreement from 83.3% of respondents. The two areas where awareness was slightly less uniform were civic education and fighting censorship. For civic education, 50.0% strongly agreed, 16.7% agreed, and 33.3% disagreed. The item on censorship was where disagreement was most pronounced: 66.7% strongly agreed that public libraries fight censorship, while 33.3% disagreed.

Objective 2: Services Available in Public Libraries for the Promotion of Democratic Rule

Table 3: Availability of Democratic Services in Public Libraries (n=36)

Service	Available n(%)	Not Available n(%)
Conducive reading spaces	36(100.0)	0(0.0)
Reading resources in various formats	36(100.0)	0(0.0)
Reading resources on various topics	36(100.0)	0(0.0)
Comfortable spaces for group/community meetings	24(66.7)	12(33.3)
Information and referral services	36(100.0)	0(0.0)
Civic education programs	24(66.7)	12(33.3)
Community conversations programs	24(66.7)	12(33.3)
Discussions sessions on topical issues	30(83.3)	6(16.7)
Information fact checking to combat false information	12(33.3)	24(66.7)
Skilled personnel to respond to enquiries	36(100.0)	0(0.0)

Three services were reported as available by all six respondents (100%): conducive reading spaces, reading resources in various formats, and reading resources on various topics, and skilled personnel. Information and referral services were also reported as available by all six respondents (100%), which is noteworthy given that referral services are often the bridge between library users and the broader information ecosystem, including electoral information, legal aid, and government services. The pattern shifts considerably when we look at programming services. Comfortable spaces for group and community meetings were reported as available by only 66.7% of respondents; civic education programs and community conversations programs were each reported as available by 66.7% as well. The most striking finding in this section is the near-absence of information fact-checking services: only 33.3% of respondents reported this service as available, while 66.7% said it was not available.

Objective 3: Challenges Hindering Public Libraries from Effectively Promoting Democratic Rule

Table 4: Challenges Hindering Public Libraries from Promoting Democratic Rule (n=36)

Challenge	Strongly Agree n(%)	Agree n(%)	Disagree n(%)	Strongly Disagree n(%)	Mean Score
Lack of funding affects democracy programmes	24(66.7)	6(16.7)	6(16.7)	0(0.0)	3.50 (Strongly Agree)
Inadequate training of librarians	12(33.3)	18(50.0)	6(16.7)	0(0.0)	3.17 (Agree)
Political interference affects library programs	18(50.0)	6(16.7)	12(33.3)	0(0.0)	3.17 (Agree)
Low public awareness limits participation	3(50.0)	3(50.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3.50 (Strongly Agree)
Lack of information materials in different topics	6(16.7)	24(66.7)	6(16.7)	0(0.0)	3.00 (Agree)
Lack of information materials in different formats	12(33.3)	64(66.7)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3.33 (Agree)
Lack of space for civic engagement	6(16.7)	18(50.0)	12(33.3)	0(0.0)	2.83 (Agree)
Lack of physical infrastructure (computers, etc.)	12(33.3)	12(33.3)	12(33.3)	0(0.0)	3.00 (Agree)
Lack of constant electric power supply	24(66.7)	12(33.3)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3.67 (Strongly Agree)
Lack of internet connectivity	18(50.0)	18(50.0)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)	3.50 (Strongly Agree)

The challenge that attracted the highest level of agreement was the lack of constant electric power supply, 100% agreed or strongly agreed and the lack of internet connectivity, 100% agreed or strongly agreed. Lack of funding affecting democracy programmes was agreed upon by 83.3% of respondents (66.7% strongly agreed, 16.7% agreed), with only one respondent disagreeing. Low public awareness of the existence of public libraries was identified as a challenge by all six respondents (50.0% strongly agreed, 50.0% agreed). Political interference was identified as a challenge by 83.3% of respondents (50.0% strongly agreed, one agreed, two disagreed). Inadequate training of librarians was flagged as a challenge by 83.3% of respondents, though the split between strong agreement (33.3%) and agreement (50.0%) suggests that most respondents see this as a real but perhaps not critical issue. Challenges related to the absence of information materials in different formats and topics were flagged by 100% of respondents (though with varying intensity). The lack of physical infrastructure such as computers produced more mixed results, 33.3% strongly agreed, 33.3% agreed, and 33.3% disagreed. This variability may reflect genuine differences in infrastructure across institutions. The lack of space for civic engagement was similarly mixed, with 33.3% disagreeing that this is a challenge.

Objective 4: Strategies for Enhancing the Capacity of Public Libraries to Promote Democratic Rule

The final objective invited respondents to propose, in their own words, strategies for strengthening libraries' democratic capacity. While not all respondents provided detailed responses to this open-ended item, those who did offered

suggestions that cluster into several recurring themes: funding and infrastructure, training and capacity building, community outreach and public sensitization, civic programming, and policy and inter-institutional collaboration.

i. Funding and Infrastructure

The need for adequate and targeted funding was mentioned by multiple respondents as the starting point for any meaningful reform. Six respondent explicitly called for 'adequate funds to equip public libraries' and added that 'government should make provision for constant power supply.' Another six respondents referenced to the need for improved library infrastructure alongside funds availability. These suggestions reflect the consensus in the literature. IFLA (2024) recommended improved library funding and investment in digital technologies as priority strategies for enhancing libraries' democratic role. Without reliable electricity and internet access, which adequate funding would help secure, every other strategy is compromised at the delivery level.

ii. Training and Capacity Building

Twelve respondents explicitly mentioned training and retraining as a priority strategy. Four called for 'training and capacity building of personnel,' while eight recommended 'training and retraining of librarians' as the first of five strategies. This is well-supported in the literature. Alemna (2024) argued that librarians must be equipped with the technical competencies required to support civic education and digital literacy before they can deliver these services effectively. Kranich (2024), , specifically called on librarians to collaborate with other civic literacy advocates, which requires a level of professional preparation that goes beyond traditional library training. For Nigeria specifically, where many librarians may not have received formal training in civic engagement facilitation, structured capacity building programmes, perhaps coordinated through the Nigerian Library Association would be a logical and actionable starting point.

iii. Community Outreach and Public Sensitization

Nine respondent advocated for 'sensitisation of public on the role of the public library in civic engagement matters,' while three recommended 'advocacy' and 'accountability' as strategies. These suggestions align with IFLA's (2024) recommendation for improved community outreach programs and digital platforms to raise awareness of library services. EphraimEmmanuel et al. (2021) identified the promotion of awareness through community engagement as a critical strategy for repositioning libraries as civic institutions. In a context where many Nigerians remain unaware that public libraries exist in their communities, outreach cannot be treated as a supplementary activity, but must be central to any institutional renewal strategy.

iv. Civic Programming and Community Engagement

Respondents also pointed to the need for libraries to actively 'organise regular public discourse on topical issues,' 'build strong community engagement,' and serve as 'a hub for civic engagements.' Five respondents called for 'provision of current and up-to-date resources' to support these programs. Bannon (2022) demonstrated through case study evidence that public libraries which actively program for civic knowledge, civic attitudes, and civic action produce measurable improvements in their communities' democratic participation. Jansson (2025) argued that libraries should be understood as social infrastructure, and not mere buildings that facilitate democratic deliberation through regular, structured programming.

v. Policy and Institutional Collaboration

Three respondents highlighted the importance of 'support and collaboration' as a strategic approach, and eight referenced 'archiving and preservation of cultural materials for reference purposes' as a library strategy with democratic implications. The need for policy frameworks that formally recognize libraries as democratic institutions was advanced by Jansson (2025), who argued that without policy support, library democracy work remains episodic and underfunded. Press Reader (2024) similarly emphasized the importance of partnerships between libraries, civil society organizations, and government agencies to amplify the reach and impact of library civic programs. In Nigeria's context, this might involve formal collaboration between public libraries and institutions such as the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), the National Orientation Agency (NOA), and civil society groups working on voter education and governance accountability.

Discussion of Findings

Objective 1: Librarians' Awareness of the Democratic Role of Public Libraries

The findings indicate that librarians are broadly aware of the democratic roles of public libraries, with all respondents agreeing that libraries supplement formal education (Mean = 3.67), provide equal access to information (Mean = 3.83), craft a sense of community (Mean = 3.83), and offer space for public discussions (Mean = 3.83). These results align with the IFLA-UNESCO (2022) Public Library Manifesto and the position of Aina (2023), who identifies lifelong learning and equal information access as core library responsibilities. Awareness was slightly less uniform for civic education (Mean = 3.17) and fighting censorship (Mean = 3.33), where a third of respondents disagreed. This likely reflects the gap between theoretical mandates and actual practice: in environments where civic programs are absent and political interference is common, these roles may feel aspirational rather than operational (Ezeani & Nwabueze, 2022;

Alemna, 2024). Nonetheless, the general awareness level is encouraging and provides a foundation for service improvement.

Objective 2: Services Available for Promoting Democratic Rule

Basic library infrastructure such as reading spaces, collections, and personnel is consistently available across surveyed libraries. However, democratic programming is considerably less uniform. Civic education programmes, community conversation spaces, and comfortable meeting spaces were available in only 66.7% of libraries, while information fact-checking arguably the most urgent civic service in an era of rampant misinformation was available in only 33.3% of institutions. This aligns with Yap, Barat, and Kiszl (2024), who documented the growing importance of libraries as fact-checking institutions, and with Veillette (2024), who noted that libraries often lack the capacity to respond to specific democratic information needs. The data reveal a two-tier picture: strong physical infrastructure but weak democratic programming capacity.

Objective 3: Challenges Hindering Effective Democratic Engagement

The challenges identified are systemic and interconnected. Lack of constant electricity (Mean = 3.67) and internet connectivity (Mean = 3.50) were identified unanimously, confirming infrastructure inadequacy as the most entrenched barrier to modern library service delivery. Insufficient funding (Mean = 3.50) and low public awareness (Mean = 3.50) compound this problem. As Osuchukwu et al. (2022) reported, the average annual budget for a state library in Nigeria is approximately 3.5 million Naira (~$8,300 USD), most of which covers personnel costs, leaving little for civic programming or digital infrastructure. Political interference (Mean = 3.17) and inadequate staff training (Mean = 3.17) further constrain institutional capacity. Together, these barriers create a self-reinforcing cycle: underfunding limits infrastructure; poor infrastructure reduces relevance; reduced relevance weakens the case for increased funding. These findings extend the observations of Ezeani and Nwabueze (2022) and Ephraim Emmanuel et al. (2021), who documented similar structural barriers across Nigeria.

Objective 4: Strategies for Enhancing Libraries' Democratic Capacity

Respondents proposed strategies that cluster around five themes: adequate and targeted funding, capacity building and training, community outreach, civic programming, and policy and inter-institutional collaboration. These align with IFLA (2024) recommendations for improved funding, digital infrastructure investment, and community outreach. The call for librarian training echoes Alemna (2024), who argued that librarians must be equipped with civic literacy facilitation skills before they can effectively deliver democracy-related services. Respondents also highlighted the need for formal collaboration with institutions such as INEC, the National Orientation Agency, and civil society organizations, an approach supported by Jansson (2025) and Press Reader (2024). Without a supportive policy framework that recognizes libraries as democratic institutions, these strategies risk remaining episodic and underfunded.

Summary of Findings

This study set out to assess the knowledge and awareness of public librarians, regarding the role of public libraries in promoting democratic governance in Nigeria. Drawing on responses from thirty-six librarians in different public libraries in Nigeria, the study show that:

1. Librarians in Nigeria are broadly aware that public libraries perform democratic functions, including supplementing formal education, providing equal access to information, crafting a sense of community, and offering space for public discourse. Awareness was most consistent for traditional library functions and somewhat more variable for politically sensitive roles such as fighting censorship, where 33.3% of respondents expressed disagreement.
2. While basic library infrastructure, reading spaces, collections, personnel, and referral services is consistently available across the libraries surveyed, democratic programming is considerably less uniform. Civic education programs, community conversations, and space for group meetings were available in only 66.7% of libraries surveyed. Information fact-checking arguably among the most needed services in today's information environment was available in only 33.3% of institutions.
3. The challenges identified by respondents are systemic and interconnected. Unreliable electricity and the absence of internet connectivity were flagged unanimously. Insufficient funding, low public awareness, political interference, and inadequate librarian training were also widely cited. These barriers collectively explain the gap between what libraries are expected to do and what they are actually able to deliver in the Nigerian context.
4. The respondents proposed a coherent set of strategies for reform, centering on adequate funding, targeted training, community sensitization, civic programming, and inter-institutional collaboration, a set of priorities that is well-aligned with the recommendations of leading scholars and international library organizations.

Conclusion

This study examined librarians' knowledge and awareness of the role of public libraries in promoting democratic governance in Nigeria. The central finding is that awareness is not the problem. Librarians working across the surveyed Public Library of Nigeria demonstrated a reasonable understanding of the democratic functions their institutions are

expected to perform such as supplementing formal education, providing equal and open access to information, fostering community dialogue, and supporting civic engagement. The deficit lies not in professional knowledge but in the conditions required to act on it.

The study found that democratic programming such as civic education, community conversations, and information fact-checking is either absent or inconsistent across the libraries surveyed, and that this gap is driven by a cluster of interconnected structural failures: unreliable electricity, no internet connectivity, chronic underfunding, political interference, and inadequate professional training. These are not isolated shortcomings; they form a cycle in which poor infrastructure suppresses service delivery, low service visibility reduces public engagement, and reduced engagement weakens the case for improved funding. Breaking this cycle requires deliberate intervention from government, the professional library community, and institutional policymakers. The absence of fact-checking services is particularly consequential, given that the spread of political misinformation has become one of the defining governance challenges facing Nigeria's democracy.

Public libraries in Nigeria possess both the institutional mandate and the professional workforce to contribute meaningfully to democratic governance. What they lack is the sustained political will, adequate funding, and enabling policy environment needed to fulfil that mandate. Until public libraries are treated as essential democratic infrastructure rather than peripheral cultural institutions, the gap between what Nigerian librarians know their libraries should do and what those libraries are actually able to deliver will remain at considerable cost to the quality of civic life in Nigeria.

Recommendations
On the basis of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The federal and states governments should substantially increase budgetary allocations to public libraries, with ring-fenced funding specifically for democracy-related programming. Allocations should be structured to move beyond personnel costs and include dedicated lines for civic education, community engagement programs, and digital infrastructure.

2. The Nigerian Library Association (NLA), in collaboration with relevant government agencies and civil society organizations, should design and implement a structured, continuing professional development program focused on civic facilitation, democratic literacy, and civic programming. Librarians who have the awareness and the knowledge but lack the skills to facilitate civic events need practical training, not just a conceptual workshops.

3. Public libraries should be equipped with reliable alternative power solutions, such as solar panels, inverters, or diesel generators, as well as consistent internet connectivity, treated as a baseline operational requirement rather than an optional extra. Without these, every other initiative for enhancing library services will be compromised.

4. Public libraries in Nigeria should formally incorporate information fact-checking as a defined service, supported by trained personnel, verified information tools, and clear protocols. Collaboration with established fact-checking organizations, journalism schools, and civic technology groups could accelerate this process. As misinformation continues to distort democratic discourse in Nigeria, this has become a core democratic function.

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