

Chapter 15

Towards Sustainability: Introducing Customer Care Representative Practices in Special Libraries of the 21st Century

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ABSTRACT

Customer satisfaction is the central focus of typical library and information services and operations. The chapter examines the extent to which CC services assumed reliable strategies for proactive 21st-century librarians in making their services relevant and impactful towards the satisfaction of the information needs of their customers (clientele). It also made an effort to discover the significance of the customer care (CC) in the special library with respect to its application in boosting absolute customer satisfaction. Recommendations made at the end of the study emphasize the adoption of customer care practices and principles by 21st century librarians towards better customer service delivery among other benefits.

INTRODUCTION

The stand of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals for the use and adoption of the concept of sustainability should not be misinterpreted, rather it is a perfect ideology suitable for decision-making in this 21st century, owing to the prevalence of chaotic information access and utilization. The word “sustainability” since it first used by a Saxon Mining Administrator, H.C.V. Carlowits, back there in the 17th Century to advocate for judicious use of forest resources, it has also been used by several international bodies, organizations, and professions to initiate the adoption of useful strategies that help their values and services continue to thrive. Customer Care (CC) among other strategies is a necessity that is being initiated for the sustainability of value-giving services of special libraries and to bring career fulfillment in terms of social, economic, and environmental scale.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-5964-5.ch015

LIS as a profession owns its operations strictly to the satisfaction of the information needs of the clientele that receive its values. Professionals in the field of librarianship hold this customer-focused foundational objective to their credit. Okoro (2019) confirms that Librarianship as a profession is all about the provision and easy accessibility of relevant information. In ensuring this, the sustenance of appropriate information service delivery, emphasis is placed on customer care and satisfaction, rather than the accumulation of materials without a discernible user-focused plan. Therefore, it is customary for typical special librarians to have customers' interests at the top of their priority and such users' need serves as an indicator for the acquisition of materials with which to serve the user. Conventionally, librarians have devised numerous sequences of strategies within and outside their area of operation to get their services to the appropriate target user. The adoption of such strategies by conventional librarians is commensurate with the actualization of the life span of their stock-in-trade 'information'. Atinmo (2012) said that information has a clear life cycle ranging from collection to transmission, processing, storage, dissemination, use, and disposal. The success of librarians or any information broker reaches its peak whenever these operational cycles are complete. In a bid to ensure consistent success, the proactive librarians of the 21st century put in place customer care (CC).

Customer Care (CC) is hereby being adopted as a special mode of operation in all typical special libraries taking another dimension owing to the unmitigated big bangs of information explosions of the 21st century. Information access channels are now limitless and the users' table gets flooded with chaotic ideas being rendered useless for lack of order or organized delivery. More proactive services are expected from the 21st Century Special Librarians and other information service providers. Beyond the conventional users' outreach services such as Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) and Current Awareness Service (CAS), Librarians can now take relevant and appropriate pieces of information to the doorstep of prospective patrons and provide full guides for a complete cycle of accessibility and utilization.

What is Customer Care in Special Library?

Customer care is a planned sequence of operations that deals with the treatment of customers with respect and kindness as well as building an emotional connection with them. It is a special operation handled by the entire group of staff in an organization in a bid to promote a commodity or certain meritorious services. For the sake of this writing the "Customer" in the clause "*customer care*" shall be used synonymous with the word like "Library Users", "Patrons" and "Clienteles" in agreement with the standard terminologies used in the field of Library and Information Science (LIS) as applicable in every typical special library.

Special libraries are called special based on the specific information services they render to specific users operating in the same field or profession. Adoption of customer care is highly crucial in their line of duties.

Customer care in the special library can be defined as special pre planned strategies put in place to render highly rewarding services to the library clientele in the manner they want it, in the kindest way possible, to sustain their permanent interests in the service of the library. Customer care is not an ad-hoc service or value rendered voluntarily or out of discretion, it is a status quo, to be entrenched in the special library's core values and principles.

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