

Management of feelings: case studies from libraries in West Africa

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Abstract:

In recent years, library have been engaged in an evolutionary process, focusing on services to the public and the transformation of their spaces into third places. They are increasingly focusing their strategies on the development of partnerships and ways to increase membership.

This transformation also involves programming around digital cultures, which makes it possible to attract, retain and above all crossroads new audiences around unifying projects.

In this mutation, the role of the librarians also changes towards more animation and socialization, of trainers, of accompagniers on the borderline of confidants. The general observation quite often shows that this relationship between users of the library creates quite intimate relationships that lead to a loving relationship.

This study is based on a request from the FESSEUL Association to organise an event on 14 February 2019 at the library of the French Institute in Dakar.

Upon receipt of the request, librarians and users gave meaning to the debate since they all received, at one time or another, a declaration of love from one or more users or even are victims of harassment.

During the event, we gathered testimonies that prove that more and more couples are forming in libraries and this can be explained by the fact that librarians and users spend most of their time together, rubbing shoulders and enjoying each other.

One component of this article will focus on the testimonies of library professionals who are constantly harassed by users. This raises several questions. Indeed, how to be open and firm while playing a role of mediator close to your public in the library.

This study will also ask other questions:

1. *How are library personal-relationships born and how long do they last?*
2. *When the feelings are not shared, what approaches can be used to promote good working conditions ?*
3. *If one of them does not consent to this love, especially the librarian, how should he protect himself while maintaining a good relationship with the user?*

In short, the article will share the love in the library as it is experienced and felt by West Africans.

Keywords: librarian; user; management of feelings; west Africa; love.

Introduction

Libraries are undergoing more and more changes. The latter is due to the evolution of society, which in turn leads to an evolution of users' needs. Thus, was born the concept of a third place in a library, which is characterized by five criteria, the main ones being, as Mathilde SERVET (*Les Bibliothèques troisième lieu*, 2009) explains: a strong physical base, a strong social vocation, and a new cultural approach. Providing maximum satiety to users becomes the focus of the librarian's objectives. The concept of a third place not only makes it useful to the user, it also allows the librarian to work in a friendly atmosphere. His functions evolve towards more animation, socialization, the role of trainer, coaches, and more and more confidants.

The general observation shows that these changes induce a certain proximity that can turn into love between individuals: librarian-user, librarian-librarian-librarian, user-user.

In this article we will look at these categories of relationships. We often notice that when feelings are reciprocal, they lead to happy events such as couple lives that last over time. When they are not shared, the situation requires the non-consenting person to manage his or her relationships tactfully, either with the user or his or her colleague. These situations, sometimes of harassment, which are becoming more and more recurrent, remain taboo and require attention. It is in this context that this study is taking place in order to have more clarity on this phenomenon.

This study is based on a request from the FESSEUL Association to organise an event on 14 February 2019 at the library of the French Institute in Dakar. Information professionals and users answered the call and gave meaning to the debate since they have all been intermediaries or have received, at one time or another, a declaration of love from one or more users or colleagues or even are victims of harassment. During the event, testimonies from readers who fell in love in these places and also from librarians who fell in love with readers they appreciated were collected. The testimonies collected show that more and more couples are forming in libraries. This can be explained by the fact that these people spend most of their time together, rub shoulders with each other and necessarily appreciate each other. On the other hand, we will focus on the testimonies of library professionals who are constantly harassed by users. These statements raise several questions. Indeed, how can you be open and firm while playing a role of mediator close to your public in the library? This study will contribute to broadening the knowledge base of library behavioural studies, relationship management by documentary information professionals to help fill the information gap in the field.

This study will also ask other questions:

- 1) How do library relationships develop and how long do they last?
- 2) When not shared, what approaches can be used to promote good working conditions?
- 3) If one of them does not consent to this love, especially the librarian, how should he protect himself while maintaining a good relationship with the user?

In summary, the article will share the love in libraries as it is experienced and felt by library professionals and users in West Africa.

Recension:

It consisted in searching on the Internet and in the library for scientific or non-scientific documents dealing with love in the library. The observation that has been made shows that there is almost no scientific research on love stories in libraries in the French-speaking literature. And yet, for centuries, magnificent love books have been circulating in these libraries, such as Gustave Flaubert's "sentimental education" published in the 1800s or the more recent trilogy "Fifty Shades of Grey". We can quote Rhett Ellis' book "How I Fell in Love with a Librarian and Lived to Tell About it" which closely matches our theme.

Every day there are love stories in libraries that we may not dare to tell because society considers them taboo. It is therefore relevant to take an interest in this subject that is part of everyday life in this cultural place. There are still blog posts, Facebook posts and videos on YouTube where librarians and users share their love stories in the library and the harassment they have been subjected to.

Methods:

For the writing of this article, a cross-sectional study coupled with the observation was conducted. The notion of a third place is not yet integrated in a good part of these libraries because it requires financial investments for the purchase of adequate furniture in order to put users in the best conditions. Even if all the means are not in place, West African libraries are making every effort to attract and maintain the public, hence the emergence of close relations between users and the documentary information professional.

To talk about this phenomenon, we first developed a survey that was translated into the three official languages of these West African countries. We sent them to colleagues and users by email and shared them through social networks, identifying the emails of fellow librarians in the sub-region through their libraries' digital portals and websites, pages that list libraries in different countries. We also used our address books.

We asked the colleagues much as possible, to have their users and other brothers and sisters complete the questionnaire. For the users of the library where the researchers in this study work, we chose the word-of-mouth method to submit the questionnaire to users. This study was conducted with 138 documentary information professionals and library users combined. Among the countries concerned, we only received responses from Burkina Faso (0.7%), Ivory Coast (0.7%), Ghana (0.7%), Guinea-Bissau (1.5%), Mali (8.8%), Mauritania (2.9%), Niger (0.7%), Senegal (80.3%), Sierra Leone (0.7%) and Togo (2.9%). Bourque, Poulin and Cleaver recommend that, in terms of the number of respondents, "plan a sample

with at least ten times more respondents than there are variables to include in the factor analysis".

The measurement instruments in our study include 18 items, which allows our sample size to be consistent with the above recommendation.

Table n°1: items

Num	Questions
01	Have you ever fallen in love with a library user ?
02	Have you ever fallen in love with one of your fellow librarians ?
03	If yes, did you declare this love and why ? Does your relationship continue to last ? If not how long does it last ? (answer valid for the two previous questions)
04	If you have not declared your love, what are the reasons for your silence ?
05	Is a user once fallen in love with you ?
06	Does a colleague fall in love with you ?
07	If yes, how many times ?
08	Were you in agreement ?
09	If no, what was the reaction of the user or your colleague following your disagreement ?
10	Have users and / or librarians harassed you so that you can accept their request?
11	If so, how did they harass you ? Explain
12	How do you manage these sometimes unpleasant situations while promoting peaceful working conditions ?
13	Were you trained during your university studies or during the exercise of your duties to deal with these situations ?
14	If yes, how ?
15	How do you think these situations can be managed ?
16	How do you manage these situations of harassment and staff relations ?
17	What attracts you to librarians ?
18	What attracts you to users ?

The collection was done by the administration face-to-face and remotely by consent. The selection of the population was made according to the geographical position of the editors, since they are Senegalese and Togolese nationals and residents on Senegalese soil, the original idea was to conduct research on these two countries. After careful consideration, the decision was made to extend it to the West African country in order to have a larger population. The sample is shown below (Table 2)

Table 2: Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample

Variables	Modality	Effectives (en %)
Sex	Man	52,2
	Woman	47,8
Age	20 – 30 years	56,5
	31 – 40 years	30,4
	41 – 50 years	10,9
	51 – 60 years	0
	60 years and plus	2,2
Country of residence	Benin	0
	Burkina Faso	0,7
	Capo-Verde	0
	Ivory coast	0,7
	Gambia	0
	Ghana	0,7
	Guinée	0
	Guinée-Bissau	1,4

	Liberia	0
	Mali	8,7
	Mauritania	2,9
	Niger	0,7
	Nigeria	0
	Senegal	80,4
	Sierra Léone	0,7
	Togo	2,9
Profile	Users	45,65
	Librarians	54,34
Type of library	Public	47,8
	Scholarly	47,1
	National	2,9
	Municipal	6,5
	Academic	29
	Private	29,7
	Others	4,3
Library use (in years)	1 à 5 years	30,88
	6 à 10 years	16,90
	11 à 15 years	14,08
	16 à 20 years	16,90
	21 à 25 years	4,22
	26 à 30 years	7,04
	31 à 35 years	9,8
	36 à 40 years	1,40
	41 à 60 years	
Contact between profiles	Loan and return of document	75,4
	Finding a document	73,1
	Finding information	71,6

Workshop animations and	28,4
Discussion	48,5
Registration	47
Others	5,6

Data collection:

The data for this study were collected through mixed research that allowed us to combine qualitative and quantitative data (How to Conduct a Study from A to Z, CSMO 2007).

Qualitative information was collected in three ways. First, we conducted interviews with library professionals; second, the meeting organized on February 14, 2019 at the library of the French Institute in Dakar was a source of information, and finally we took into account recurring observations in the library, our workplace.

The quantitative information was collected through a questionnaire that we administered and sent to users and fellow librarians. We also mentioned open-ended questions because this is a mixed research to allow respondents to express themselves by giving their points of view that differ because love is an unquantifiable variable that changes from one person to another.

The questionnaire was carried out with the Google form tool which allowed us to share it with a wide audience by email, on the Internet, on social networks. It also allowed us to automatically generate the results to facilitate interpretation. After the study design and identification of the study population, the measurements were administered during May 2019.

The library a "dating place":

Users and librarians spend an average of about 17 hours in libraries per week. They are like at home and most often use public (47.8%), university (47.1%), national (2.9%), municipal (6.5%), school (29%), private (29.7%) and other (4.3%) libraries. They go there for several reasons: loans and returns of documents (75.4%), search for documents (73.1%), search for information (71.6%), workshops and activities (28.4%), discussion (48.5%), registration (47%), internship (0.7%), entertainment and courtesy (1.6%), seminar (0.87 training / orientation (1.6%). They find several documents (books, magazines, DVDs, music CDs) in different orientations. They enjoy a friendly space with adequate furniture for work and rest and internet connection to allow them to chat with the rest of the world and do research. In addition to all these good conditions, African libraries are increasingly offering activities and debates of ideas, educational and social chat sessions where users are invited to share and receive knowledge on a specific field. During these activities, the public exchanges, discovers the positions to each other. Thus, 56% versus 43.5% of respondents said they were close to users and/or librarians thanks to these meetings. They say they get closer to users or librarians for reasons: professional, family, regularity in the library, discussions, camaraderie, geography, love of books and book exchange. Over time, these social interactions that

highlight users' behaviours and feelings make some of these people become friends, exchange ideas, meet elsewhere, and sometimes fall in love.

Experience has shown that several relationships between users have resulted in marriage. This is the case for many librarians and users who say: "*The user I fell in love with is a secretary and colleague in the department. We are always in contact*". A user adds: "*we appreciate each other, we have declared our respective feelings, we have married legally, our love story continues*". Another librarian said: "*I spontaneously declared my love flame to my colleague because I was in love with her as soon as her profile matched my aspirations in this area and fortunately, it was mutual. I married him and we are still pursuing our love affair*". As far as the staff is concerned, this "dating" tendency between users of the library does not pose any problem as long as the people concerned do not show their love by inappropriate gestures that would undermine modesty and disturb the conscience of others; they should not even kiss each

Love at first sight in the library

Other in the library, for example as the book *Good Manners and Politeness* suggests, would have the prize of excellence? (Alix Baboin-Jaubert, *practical larousse*, 2015).

On the other hand, it is a situation of pride for librarians because thanks to their premises and services, strong social ties are forged.

In general, in libraries, there is one team that deals with collections and another with service to the public. These professionals work closely together because the colleague's opinion is necessary in the documentary chain. On the fringes of this situation, we observe that these librarians, who rub shoulders, become close and necessarily appreciate each other. They can become friends and later fall in love (22.2%).

At the meeting organized by the NGO FEUSSEUL at the library of the French Institute of Dakar on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2019, we received testimonies from library couples. One of them told us that it was seeing each other every day that brought them closer together in addition to the work they had to do as a team. He also pointed out that this does not disturb their work because they are discreet. It is in this same vein that a colleague states that he manages "*by making a difference between his professional life and his love life*". Another couple of librarians told us that when they started dating, the colleague who was working on a fixed-term contract preferred to leave for fear of creating trouble for herself. It was after this separation from the workplace that they were finally able to fully experience their love.

When a librarian falls in love with a user - when a user falls in love with a librarian.

The helpful, welcoming, smiling librarian by offering services to a respectful studious member, and the said member can start appreciating each other overtime.

This is a rather delicate situation for the librarian who faces a dilemma because in the context of work, he (she) can only maintain professional relations with users. A declaration of

love made to a user in the library may cause the user to stop coming, resulting in a decrease in attendance. A respondent's reflection supports this observation: *"If I feel uncomfortable after being declared a possible love, I would simply not come back to these places"*

In the responses to the questionnaires, 16.7% of librarians fell in love with their users. Some explain why they have kept their love secret: *"For ethical reasons and the ethics of the profession"; "it would not be appropriate for me to let such a relationship arise"; "I am too shy to express my feelings to him"*. So, they preferred to retain their feelings. On the other hand, only five (5) respondents to the questionnaire declared this love to the user but they specify outside the library, by inviting them elsewhere.

We found that users feel more comfortable declaring their feelings to librarians because they never delay in making their confessions. Also, in the questionnaire, 32.8% of librarians and users combined said they had received statements from users with an average of 6 times. Among them, only 16.4% had accepted these requests. In the explanations, one librarian even states that it was obvious that the user should make this request given the affinities that had to develop between them, because it was, she who was his guide during his scientific research. She helped him with his requests for documents just as she did with other users, but she still doesn't know why she found it so enjoyable when it came to this particular user. So, when the user made the request she was looking forward to, she accepted. In such cases where there is consent, the relationship can continue without problems

Another user named Mohamed addressing a colleague says *"your kindness and friendliness mislead some users. You were well chosen to carry out your duties and you are doing so with"*

From love to harassment:

We find victims of harassment in all work sectors. This phenomenon can be moral or sexual and affects both men and women. As proven, these types of violence are more remarkable in occupations where professionals are in direct contact with the public (CGSLB, 2009). Thus, there are legal criteria by which it can be assessed whether or not there is harassment. When it is sexual two conditions must be met: it is untimely and insulting to the recipient (ILO).

However, it should be noted that there is a difference between sexual harassment, stress and conflicts generated in the workplace. It is in this vein that one respondent explains: *"The librarian must be careful not to think that a declaration of love is a lack of respect or a violation of the rules that govern such a place. In fact, he must naturally respond to the request with a yes or no. If it is a no, he would have to review his behaviour towards this person in order not to have any hope for him, for example. Although we have to make sure that she doesn't do it again"*.

In several West African countries such as Togo, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Niger and Côte d'Ivoire, harassment is a crime punishable by law and the sanctions vary from one country to another. These sanctions seem a little light given the seriousness of the situation and its impact on the victims. However, the Labour Code does not necessarily prohibit it, as in Senegal, where it does not clearly show repressive measures (yoursalaire.org, 2019). On the other hand, some countries such as Mali, according to a report on "human rights"

published in 2013 by Human Rights and Labour, do not have a law against sexual harassment.

Based on observations and experiences, harassment is not a first step (CGSLB, 2009). Everything starts from a love that is not shared either between colleagues, between users or between librarian and user. Harassment begins when the non-consenting person pushes back the advances and the suitor persists.

The purpose for which the future stalker may then insist on various things: either in the hope that the one for whom he or she has a love can change his or her feelings and opinions; or in the idea of punishing the other by taking real pleasure. The stalker is a real sadist who finds pleasure in doing actions that will displease the person being harassed.

Therefore, there are several ways to harass: through violence by highlighting one's strength or repetitiveness by doing the same actions on the person for a long time. The harasser, who feels love for a person who disagrees, always tries to approach the person, to find an opportunity to touch the person, to look at them constantly, to appreciate them and to say repetitive words to relieve their desire. (CGSLB, 2019).

Based on the information collected, repetitiveness is recurrent in library harassment and manifests itself in physical, verbal, or telephone harassment. The stalker often calls the personal number of the stalker he or she has obtained from a third party or goes to the library just to be in the presence of the stalker and reiterates his or her request. This insistence is reflected in compliments that are becoming increasingly inappropriate or touching.

A documentation information professional explains: "*When I put the books away and he walks by or meets me in the aisles, he places his hand on my shoulder as a greeting or gives me lascivious looks. I often try to avoid him, but he never misses an opportunity. His actions make me feel disgusted*". Another adds: "*He has always had inappropriate and vulgar words about me. I called him up and explained that I am a married woman. This did not deter him. One day when he was making a loan, he came back to the charge. It took the intervention of another user to get him to leave me alone. Since then I have tried as hard as I can to be professional with him*". In Alougba added, "*We women have often faced violence in unexpected places. The other day in the late afternoon, the librarian had to face the somewhat cavalier remarks of a young man to whom it seems we had not taught the rules of decorum. I had to intervene. (...) it would be good to remind these young people and even the elderly that they should watch their language and refrain from behaviour that is too suggestive, disturbing and hurtful to women wherever they may be*".

When it comes to the relationship between colleagues, librarian-users, the harasser sometimes intimidates by raising his voice in order to stress and make people uncomfortable. It is therefore necessary, as recommended by several professionals, to integrate library behaviour management into university modules.

Conclusion

Documentation information professionals are often considered as representatives to see the mirror of knowledge through their profession. Thus, a bibliophile would be more likely to see his soul mate through the book professional by seeing in him a person with whom to share his passion. It was noted that the age factor influences couple formation in libraries and is

most relevant to new professionals given the number of respondents. We found from the study that the number of respondents reporting falling in love or being harassed is relatively low.

This is due to several factors, the main one being the taboo nature of discussions on the issue of feelings in Africa. Indeed, we received several feedbacks from colleagues and users who considered the questions too sensitive and personal even after we explained to them that the questionnaire was anonymous. The study also shows that women are the population most affected by harassment because of their vulnerability to situations that confront them with men. As far as relations between professionals are concerned, from our observations we have noticed an increase in marital involvement.

One manager stated, "I would have liked to be aware of these affinities in order to properly manage my department. "In this study we did not take into account "the love of users and librarians for collections", which is another aspect of library loves stories that should be studied.

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