

The engagement of communities in the provision of library services: the case of public libraries in Zambia

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Abstract:

Public libraries, by nature of their functions, play a key role in national development. This is regardless of the ministries or organizations they are affiliated to. In order to remain relevant, public libraries must ensure that they are responsive to the needs of their communities. No library is an island, and because of this, libraries must ensure that they work in collaboration with communities and other partners to remain relevant institutions.

With a population of over 15,000,000 people, and with a limited number of public libraries in Zambia, there is urgent need to ensure that the limited public libraries ensure that they provide services that will have a positive impact on the communities they serve. For libraries to stand the test of time and develop sustainable programmes, it is imperative that the community and other stakeholders are adequately engaged at various levels. Public libraries in Zambia, have in the recent past strived to remain relevant in this fast changing world.

The objectives of this study included: determining the extent to which public libraries in Zambia were striving to transform themselves in keeping pace with the changing economic, social, and technological aspects; exploring the ways in which public libraries in Zambia were engaging their communities with the aim of providing relevant library services. The study will further look at how public libraries had collaborated with other partners to ensure that the library services provided improved the well-being of the communities they served.

This study involved all public libraries in Zambia. In addition, the study used both quantitative and qualitative methodology. Questionnaires and follow up interviews were administered to librarians in charge of these public libraries.

Keywords: Public libraries, Community engagement, Collaboration, Partnership, Library services

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The world is changing at an alarming rate. Technology, being at the centre of it, has made people to rethink the way things are done. In addition, according to The Royal Geographical Society (2018), the internet is rapidly evolving to play a central role in society, transforming social, cultural, economic and political landscapes. The benefits are clear, but the question is whether societies are equipped to keep pace with the consequences of our increasing reliance on this technology. One of the institutions that are important in providing information resources and services in different formats and in different ways are public libraries.

Public libraries must be seen to be making a positive impact on their communities. Ellis (2011) supports this when she states that public libraries must connect to their local communities and considering modern funding constraints; this can be best done by collaborating and partnering with other local organizations. Public libraries, by nature, are meant to serve all categories of people in the community including those who may not have an opportunity of seeing the inside of a classroom or people who are not able to read and write. As Ellis further states, resources and solutions show how partnerships can be cultivated through projects, programming, funding, and extending the library's presence through unique avenues. With a diverse set of contributions from government and other supporting stakeholders, libraries are likely to have a much more positive impact on the people they serve.

Alachua County Library District (ACLD) had been shifting its focus from providing residents with the very best library services to providing library services that made a better community. Hirsch, in Ellis (2011), conducted a library partnership survey in Florida, United States of America where the Library Partnership was a jointly operated facility that offered area residents full public library services. The Library Partnership, a Neighbourhood Resource Centre was a collaboration of ACLD, the Partnership for Strong Families, Inc. (PSF), the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Casey Family Programs. The initial project concept focused on the desire by PSF and DCF to redesign traditional approaches to foster care and, through preventative services and programs, reduce the number of children who entered foster care due to abuse or neglect. They were supported in their efforts by the Casey Family Programs through strategic consulting and grant support. The Library Partnership offered area residents full public library services and access to approximately thirty (30) social service agencies. The collaboration provided a unique environment for clients to receive counselling and advice from social service agencies and the resources, assistance, and services to address their needs from the public library all in one location. Clients were often referred to the library for a variety of e-Government and other services. The presence of a public library allowed potential and scheduled clients to go to the facility without the stigma often attached to entering a social service assistance centre.

In Zambia, there has been no comprehensive study conducted to ascertain the public library partnerships existing in public libraries. This study hopes to bring to light how public libraries in Zambia are involved in partnerships and how these partnerships are having an impact on the library services provided, thereby transforming libraries.

2.0 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study were:

- i. To determine the extent to which public libraries in Zambia were striving to transform themselves in keeping pace with the changing economic, social, and technological aspects.
- ii. To explore the ways in which public libraries in Zambia were engaging their communities with the aim of providing relevant library services.
- iii. To establish how public libraries in Zambia had collaborated with other partners to ensure that the library services provided improved the well-being of the communities they served.

3.0 SAMPLE AND METHODOLOGY

The study was based on the twenty-two main public and/or community libraries in Zambia with responses covering all these main libraries and also the twenty-three branch libraries. This study used both quantitative and qualitative research methodology. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect information. Questionnaires were administered via email to librarians in charge of twenty main public libraries and for the other two, structured interviews were administered. Interviews were further conducted with Library and Information Association of Zambia President. The study recorded a response of 100%.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Public libraries in Zambia: distribution, management and funding

4.1.1 Public Libraries in Zambia

The following table shows the public libraries in Zambia (Table 1):

No.	Name of main public library
1.	Chililabombwe Municipal Council Library
2.	Chingola Municipal Council Library
3.	Chipata Provincial Library
4.	Choma Provincial Library
5.	Fountain of Hope Community Centre Library
6.	Hellen Kaunda Memorial Public Library
7.	Kabwe Municipal Council Library
8.	Kalulushi Municipal Council Library
9.	Kamanga Irish Community Centre Library
10.	Kasama Provincial Library
11.	Kitwe Public Library
12.	Livingstone City Council Library
13.	Mansa Provincial Library
14.	Lubuto Library Partners Model Library
15.	Lubuto Mthunzi American Youth Library
16.	Lusaka City Council Library
17.	Mongu Provincial Library
18.	Mumuni Library
19.	Ndola Council Public Library
20.	Samuel Reuben Mwewa Public Library
21.	Solwezi Provincial Library
22.	Zambia Library Service – Public Library Headquarters

Table 1: Public Libraries in Zambia

Zambia has twenty-two main public libraries.

4.1.2 Distribution and management of public libraries in Zambia

The following table shows the distribution of public libraries in Zambia across provinces, the branches and the organizations responsible for the public libraries.

Province	Name of main public library	Name/s of branch libraries	Ministry/ Organization responsible
Copperbelt	Chililabombwe Municipal Council Library	-	Ministry of Local Government (MLG)
	Chingola Municipal Council Library	-	MLG
	Kalulushi Municipal Council Library	Chambishi and Chibuluma Public Libraries	MLG
	Kitwe Public Library	Buchi Public Library	MLG
	Hellen Kaunda Memorial Public Library	-	MLG
	Samuel Reuben Mwewa Public Library	Kamuchanga Public Library	MLG
	Ndola City Council Library	Kabushi, Masala, Lubuto, Twapia and Chifubu	MLG
Central	Kabwe Public Library	Bwacha Public Library, Katondo Environmental Public Information Centre, Makululu Epic Library and Kasabda Epic Library	MLG
Eastern	Chipata Provincial Library	-	Ministry of General Education (MOGE)
Luapula	Luapula Provincial Library	Kawambwa Public Library	MOGE
Lusaka	Lusaka City Council Library	Chilenje Public Library, Matero Public Library and Mtendere Public Library	MLG
	Zambia Library Service – Public Library Headquarters	-	MOGE
	Lubuto Mthunzi American Youth Library	-	Lubuto Library Partners (LLP)
	Lubuto Library Partners Model Library	-	LLP
	Fountain of Hope	-	Fountain of Hope Community Centre
	Kamanga Irish Community Centre Library	-	Kamanga Irish Community Centre
Northern	Kasama Provincial Library	Luwingu Public Library	MOGE
North-Western	Solwezi Provincial Library	Kabompo and Mwinilunga District libraries	MOGE
Southern	Choma Provincial Library	Kalomo Public Library	MOGE
	Livingstone City Council Library	-	MLG
	Mumuni Library	-	Brethren in Christ Church (BICC)
Western	Mongu Provincial Library	Kalabo and Senanga Public Libraries	MOGE

Table 2: Public Libraries in Zambia by Province and bodies responsible for the management

Table 2 above shows the main and branch public libraries in Zambia.

4.1.3 Management of Public Libraries in Zambia

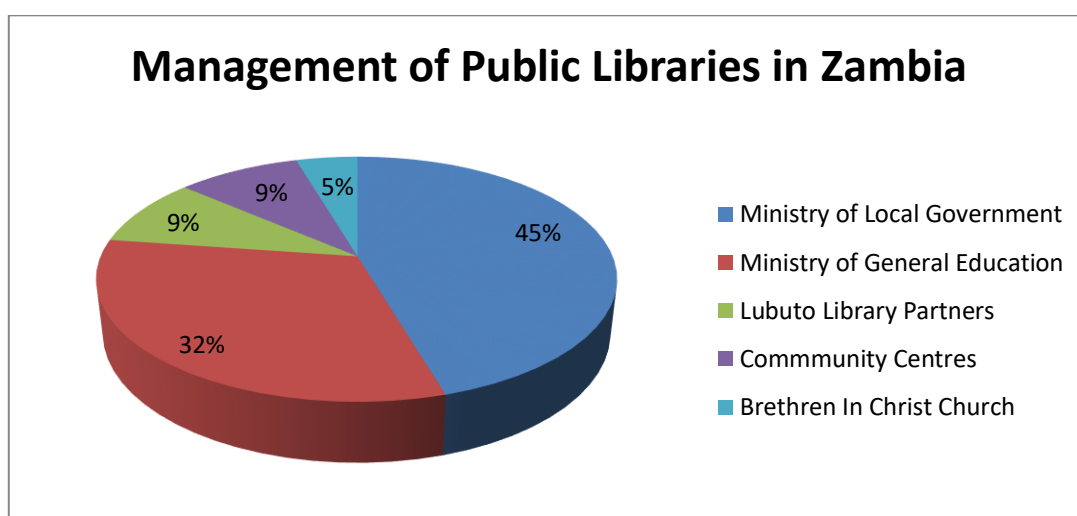


Figure 1: Management of Public Libraries in Zambia

The majority of public libraries in Zambia (45%) are managed by MLG followed by MOGE that manages 32% whilst LLP manages 9% and community centres also take up 9%. The BICC takes up 5% of the public libraries. Figure 1 above shows this distribution.

4.1.4 Sources of funding for Public Libraries in Zambia.

Category of Libraries	Sources of funding
Ministry of Local Government libraries	Councils Membership subscriptions Donors
Ministry of General Education libraries	Government – MOGE Donors Membership fees Reprographic services
Lubuto Library Partners Libraries	Donors
Others (community)	Donors Church Community

Table 3: Sources of funding for Public Libraries in Zambia

The above table shows the various sources of funding for public librarians in Zambia.

4.2 Public library partnerships

The table below shows partners in Zambia that public librarians worked with.

Libraries	Partner/s
All Zambia Library Service (ZLS) libraries (ZLS Headquarters, Mongu, Chipata, Solwezi, Mansa, Kasama and Choma)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book Aid International • Electronic Information for Libraries
Chililabombwe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worldreader
Chingola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worldreader
Choma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British Council • Indaba Agriculture Policy Research Institute (IAPRI) • Airtel Zambia
Kalulushi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worldreader
Kasama	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kasama College of Education
Kitwe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic Information for Libraries • Copperbelt University (CBU) • Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation (MEF) • Zambia Institute of Business Studies and Industrial Practice (ZIPSIP) • Book Bus Foundation • Worldreader
Livingstone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dziwani Knowledge Centre. • Children International Zambia. • American Embassy.
Luanshya	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worldreader
Lusaka Main Council Public Library Lusaka Matero council Library Lusaka Chilenje Library Lusaka Mtendere Council Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worldreader ; Electronic Information for Libraries • Worldreader • Worldreader • Worldreader
Lusaka ZLS Headquarters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lubuto Library Partners • Room to read • United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Mansa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools i.e. Our Lady of Mercy School, Chanel 2 Academy, Chakopo Primary School, Mother Yvonne School, Chika Private School and Muchinka Primary School.
Ndola Public Library	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worldreader
Lubuto Library Partners Model Library / Mthunzi Youth American Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electronic Information for Libraries • Barefeet Theatre • Special Hope Network • Ngwerere Primary School/Mthunzi Centre • Latkins, Intra health, Zambart
Solwezi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solwezi College of Education

Table 4: Public library partnerships in Zambia

5.0 DISCUSSION

5.1 Public libraries in Zambia: distribution, management and funding

The forty-five public libraries in Zambia are spread across eight provinces of Zambia. About 50% of the public libraries in Zambia are located on the Copperbelt (36%) and Lusaka Provinces (14%). The rest are spread in the other six provinces. The public libraries in Zambia together with other types of libraries cater for a population of about 14, 983, 315 people (Central Statistics Office, 2015).

As shown in Figure 1, MLG manages the bulk of public libraries amounting to 45% followed by Ministry of MOGE 32%. About 9% comprises Community libraries and another 9 % managed by LLP. The least, 5% is managed by BICC.

The major sources of funding for public librarians in Zambia are government for MOGE libraries, Councils for Local Government libraries and donors for all. LLP manages its libraries through it's head office with major source of funding being various partners the organization works with.

5.2 Public Library Partnerships

It is apparent that many public libraries worldwide operate with limited budgets. This is supported by Sarjeant-Jenkins & Walker (2014) who observed that libraries faced increased pressure from limited resources, and funders, including governments. It was for this reason that partnerships were seen increasingly as a method to achieve goals and enhance services. Development requires concerted efforts of interested parties.

This study revealed that about 82% of main public libraries in Zambia engaged themselves in some form of partnerships with other organizations or institutions. This is evident from Table 4 above.

To a larger extent, most libraries working with partners (82%) had well organized programmes being conducted and well-articulated library services being provided than those that did not have some form of partnerships.

The study revealed that the major partnerships that benefited public libraries the most were those that were done by partners through ZLS as well as Library and Information Association of Zambia (LIAZ).

5.2.1 Book aid International

The main partner that public libraries under MOGE worked with was Book aid International. Book Aid International is the United Kingdom's leading international book donation and library development charity whose vision is a "world where everyone has access to the books that will enrich, improve and change their lives". The seven public libraries under ZLS i.e. the provincial headquarters library and the six provincial libraries spread across seven provinces of Zambia have benefitted from this partnership.

Book aid International and ZLS through the MOGE have a Memorandum of Understanding to improve library services in the public libraries under ZLS. Book aid

International has, in this understanding, provided support to train public librarians. Librarians had received skills in the trainings that tackled topics such as; creating a vibrant library, being a great children's librarian and developing a reading culture. Others included reaching beyond the library as well as putting children at the centre. Through this partnership, public libraries had received funding to renovate the children's corners in all the provincial libraries and stocked collections with local content. This resulted in the creation of Open Doors Children's Corners (ODCC) and consequently an increase in the number of children accessing library services.

ZLS had realised a gap in the provision of information to learners who were preparing for the national exams Zambia. The non-preparedness for examinations most learners raised concern among stakeholders with the most worry being exam malpractices (Smith 2018). Since inception in September 2017, twelve study hubs had been successfully launched and were operational. The study hubs were in three different schools in each of these provinces; Northern, Southern, Lusaka and North-Western Provinces. The study hubs were an intervention that would help prepare students for examinations and consequently discourage examination malpractices. Although study hubs are in schools in Zambia, these were managed by ZLS Headquarters, which was also responsible for public library service provision in MOGE. The study hubs were tailored to the needs of learners who were revising for their examinations.

5.2.2 Electronic Information for Libraries

Electronic Information for Libraries (EIFL) had a partnership with LIAZ to train twenty-four public librarians from twelve public libraries in Zambia. The libraries benefiting from this partnership included the seven ZLS libraries, two from LLP and two from the councils as shown in Table 4 above.

The main objective of this partnership was to equip the 24 librarians with competencies and skills that supported the following:

- Computer literacy skills
- Internet resources and sharing
- New services in public libraries
- Communication, advocacy and awareness raising for public librarians
- Social learning circles for online learners

The first three modules had been covered at the time of the study.

Respondents in the study revealed that they were now competent in writing reports and presenting information in excel. One respondent indicated "I can now comfortably and confidently write my quarterly report and present to management because of the skills I received in the first training".

5.2.3 Worldreader LOCAL Project

Worldreader had a partnership with LIAZ that supported ten council libraries; six on the Copperbelt and four in Lusaka Province. Local Content for African Libraries project in Zambia (LOCAL) aimed to generate and deliver early childhood reading materials in local languages to the ten libraries. LOCAL's ultimate goal was to create an evidence-based replicable model for librarians to play an active role in creating and

supporting a culture of reading for primary school aged children through the use of digital, local language reading materials.

Through LOCAL, Worldreader had deployed a total of five hundred e-readers loaded with e-books in English and two local Zambian languages (Ichibemba and Chinyanja) in ten public libraries across two regions in Zambia. Each participating library received fifty e-readers and an extra management e-reader to facilitate sending of reports. Through this project, librarians from participating libraries received training. The training had equipped librarians with skills that would help them conduct reading programs with the children using e-readers. The training components included; e-reader management, community engagement, practical sessions using e-readers and outreach. Banda (2018) observed that the e-readers had boosted morale for council public librarians and with the e-readers, the number of children seeking library services would rise as a result of the new project. Banda (2018) further stated that this project solved challenges that most council libraries had regarding children accessing reading resources electronically. The project was well placed in meeting the huge deficit in terms of ICT infrastructure in council public libraries. The benefiting libraries had a boost in the area of e-content available in their libraries. Technological changes in the world were happening at an alarming rate and the generation being raised was techno savvy; so the LOCAL project came handy in meeting the technological demands the young patrons were craving for. Public libraries were confident that this project which is still in its early stages, will have a positive impact on library communities.

5.2.4 Choma Provincial Library

Choma Provincial Library partnered with British Council in providing computers to establish the digital hub. This has resulted in the provincial library providing ICT related library services that included among others; a programme called Schools Online for teachers, the creation of emails for teachers following a directive that all pay slips for teachers would be emailed, online application of Taxpayer Identification Numbers (TPINs) following a new requirement that all bank account holders in Zambia needed to apply for this number online. In addition the provincial library had been offering printing services for the TPIN certificates once approved. The community needs were realized as a result of community engagement. The provincial Librarian was a Young African Library Innovators (IYALI) initiative graduate with the support of eifl. This initiative aimed to expose emerging public library innovators in Africa to experience and ideas from other developing and transition economy countries. The creation of this digital hub had seen an increase in the access of electronic materials by library users, increased internet research and users learning how to use computers. The provincial library in addition received internet support from Airtel Zambia on a monthly basis. Additionally, the library received research reports from Indaba Agriculture Policy Research Institute (IAPRI) which supplemented on the collection of the library. These reports were crucial in that the library was surrounded by a farming community that made use of them.

5.2.5 Solwezi Provincial Library

Solwezi Provincial Library had partnered with Solwezi College of Education to sensitize and promote the use of libraries through exhibitions and debates during national library week celebrations. In fact, all ZLS provincial libraries work with schools and/or colleges during National Library Week celebrations to promote literacy countrywide. Solwezi library also housed a study hub study that aimed at assisting pupils in examination classes to prepare for their exams through enhanced provision of the library to offer increased access to locally purchased school curriculum books and supplementary books for the key examination subjects and leisure. The ODCC aimed at ensuring that children had a conducive environment and level appropriate resources to help improve their literacy levels.

5.2.6 Mansa Provincial Library

Mansa Provincial Library had been a beneficiary of the EIFL and Book aid programmes as earlier stated. In addition, the Provincial Librarian was a graduate of the International Network of Emerging Library Innovators (INELI) for Sub-Saharan Africa. This was through a partnership between African Library & Information Associations & Institutions (AfLIA) to which Zambia is a member and the Global Libraries (GL) Programme of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to deliver leadership training for public librarians. This partnership was established to support the transformation of public libraries into engines of development and this was done by supporting upcoming public librarians to develop innovative services for the benefit of their communities. In fact at the time of this study, Zambia had five public librarians on the INELI programme.

Mansa Provincial Library conducted well-organized homework clubs in partnership with neighbouring schools. In addition, library ICT lessons were conducted to support the ICT secondary curriculum that includes this component.

5.2.7 Lubuto Library Partners

LLP is an innovative development organization that builds the capacity of African libraries to create opportunities for equitable education and poverty reduction (Lubuto Library Partners).

LLP had a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with MOGE that aimed to ensure that Ngwerere Primary School, on whose grounds the Lubuto Model Library was built benefited from library services that the public library provided. Library services offered included: internet service provision, story time sessions, drama, mentoring sessions, movie screenings and many other programs.

Lubuto Library Partners managed two libraries in Lusaka, Zambia. These were the Lubuto's Ngwerere Model Library and Lubuto's Mthunzi American Youth Library. From the onset, LLP had built a total of four libraries. The other two had since been handed over to other partners to manage. The Brethren in Christ Church took over the management of the Mumuni Library in Monze district. Home of Hope Library which was initially called Fountain of Hope under LLP was handed over to the community under the management of Home of Hope Centre.

This study revealed that LLP had a partnership with LIAZ to develop the capacity of public librarians in various skills. The training was held in 2017 where public librarians from 17 main public libraries participated. The training was in order to build the capacity of public librarians in the provision of children's library services, early literacy, provision of library services to the differently-abled, innovation, library outreach, digital literacy, customer care and marketing of library services. A follow-up survey was done to ascertain whether the participants had implemented new library projects/activities following the training. It was established that at least seven libraries had initiated trainings with the most outstanding being Mansa, Choma and Solwezi libraries.

The Library manager for Lubuto's Ngwerere Library is also an IYALI graduate. As an organization, and through the two LLP libraries, drama was used to educate library users in various ways. In terms of partnerships, Lubuto had partnered with Barefeet to work with the drama group in creating and acting out drama plays derived from books available in their collections. Barefeet Theatre is a non-governmental organization that builds capacity in vulnerable children using play, creativity and empowerment to give vulnerable children a chance of a better life. LLP libraries had also partnered with Special Hope Network, a faith-based NGO working in Zambia, Africa whose mission was to encourage, support and provide economic solutions to address the needs of children with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Zambian communities. They aforementioned organization had since provided training of all library staff on how to work with children with intellectual disabilities. In addition, LLP libraries had been working collaboratively with Latkins, Intra health, Zambart. These were health service providers who had subsequently provided HTCT (HIV Testing Counselling and treatment) at the libraries as part of the DREAMS mentoring program component.

5.2.8 *Kitwe City Council Library*

Kitwe City Council library is one of the main libraries under MLG. It is one of the beneficiaries of the Worldreader partnership through the local association as earlier stated. Apart from this partnership, Kitwe City Council Library works closely with CBU, MEF and ZIPSIP as highlighted in Table 4. The purpose of this partnership was to enable users of the Kitwe City Council to access information resources from these institutions through the interlibrary loan agreement. This facilitated wider access to information resources for the users. In addition, Kitwe library also had a partnership with Book Bus Foundation to promote reading culture of children.

5.2.9 *Livingstone City Council Library*

Livingstone City Council Library is housed in the tourist capital of Zambia, Livingstone in the Southern Province. It has not been left out in working with other institutions to improve library service delivery. The Livingstone Council Library, in Partnership with Dziwani Knowledge Centre helped establish the library health corner. And up to 2016, Dziwani had been providing information resources related to health to the library. The library also had a partnership with Children International Zambia which regularly donated children's books to the library. The library also worked with the American Embassy on the Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI) Programmes in Zambia by hosting interviews for candidates in Southern Province. The library patrons also benefited because they are offered information on how they access the YALI program.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Development requires concerted efforts of many parties. This is no different when it comes to provision of public library services in Zambia. Engaging the community and developing partnerships in the provision of library services is important. Regardless of the limited support that most public libraries in Zambia receive, partnerships have proved to be very beneficial not only to libraries but Zambia as a country. Public libraries have engaged communities in developing their services and utilized the partnerships that exist. This has helped libraries to transform and provide library services that meet user needs.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the recommendations:

- i. There is need to build capacity of public librarians on how to form effective partnerships with the communities
- ii. There is need for public librarians to initiate the creation of partnerships as individual libraries within the communities they serve.

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