



MANAGEMENT OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN FEDERAL HIGH COURT LIBRARIES IN NORTH-EAST GEO-POLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Library is the knowledge base of any organization that provides information resources and services for the planning, research, training, production and development of the parent organization. Special libraries achieve this through proper management in line with the vision and mission of the parent organization. The objectives of the study were to find out how the federal high court libraries in North-eastern Nigeria provide information resources, the procedures for the management and the challenges associated with the provision and management of the information resources in these libraries. Qualitative research method, using narrative-based research design was adopted for the study while interview guide was the instrument used for data collection. Five heads of the libraries were purposely selected to serve as the study participants from five (5) Federal High Courts in the zone. The data collected was analyzed thematically using coding system. The findings revealed that the librarians in charge of the libraries had minimal control over the provision of information resources in terms of selection and acquisition. It further showed that the resources were organized serially in accordance with the broad subject of each item on the open shelves without the provision of any class mark on the books. It therefore concludes that the situation of libraries was below the standard expected and thus, leaves much to be desired. The study therefore recommends that budgetary allocation to judicial libraries should be enhanced so as to provide relevant and adequate resources and information and communication technologies for effective and efficient library services.

Keywords: Information, Information resources, Special libraries, Management, Information resources

Introduction

The term “information” has a variety of definitions. According to Mohammed (2011), it can be conceived as anything that adds to knowledge, ideas, skills and experiences positively or negatively that enables the receiver to take decisions or react to situations immediately or later. Also, Bitagi (2013) defined information as the news that comes to the receiver for the first time and enables him/her to take action according to expectations. It is expected to be self-explanatory and should serve as a guide to the receiver regarding to when to take decision and also determine the goal to be achieved and the right time to achieve it. Information is therefore necessary for the wellbeing and development



of individuals and society at large in an attempt to achieve their desired goals and objectives. It is also an important component for the work of judiciaries, whether in pre-court preparation, in-court presentation or court analysis. Information resources are carriers of information that are in different formats (books, journals, magazines, audio-visuals and other information and communication technology gadgets) required to be available and accessible for the benefit of users. These resources are provided in a typical library, and constitute a range of materials and equipment gathered by the library, in order to meet the information needs of real and potential users. Management of information resources, according to the University of Western Australia (2015), is the application of management principles to the selection, acquisition, organization, preservation, dissemination and use of information relevant to the effective operation of organizations of all kinds. Information resources management deals with the provision, [selection](#), [organization](#), preservation and [access](#) of information resources in the context of organizational performance.

A special library provides specialized information resources on a particular subject, serves a specialized and limited clientele and delivers specialized services to that clientele (Shumaker, 2009). Therefore, provision and management of information resources in special libraries are central to any meaningful research, teaching and administrative delivery of services in their parent organizations. Provision of information resources that would satisfy the information needs of users in a library has been one among the objectives behind the establishment of any library, special libraries inclusive. Special libraries function as change agents and leaders providing the information needed to help their organizations to achieve their goals (Sharmila, 2012).

Within the knowledge society that has recently emerged, Federal High Court Libraries, as custodians and disseminators of legal information, have a very important role to play. The value of timely, accurate and relevant information has increasingly been acknowledged as providing a leading edge in the modern competitive world (Moster, 2009). Despite the widely accepted view about the significance of information resources in special libraries, the Federal High Court libraries are still faced with a number of challenges, as they seek to continue providing the management of relevant information resources that users have come to expect. Some of the challenges facing management of information resource are: preservation, lack of professional skilled librarians, organization, technical/electrical infrastructure, outdated information resources and maintenance.

The essence of this study therefore, is to fill the knowledge gap in the management of information resources in Federal High Court Libraries of North eastern Nigeria, as well as add to the existing literature in the field of knowledge. Qualitative research methodology was adopted for the study as it was found appropriate. Also, narrative research design was employed in which interview was used for collecting data from the participants.

Statement of the Problem

The issue of provision and management of information resources in Federal High Court libraries are very important because of the role information resources play in the achievement of objectives of the institutions and its contribution to national development. For any organization to make appropriate decision, it must use the appropriate information resources provided and well managed by its library. For these to be accomplished, the resources must be readily available and easily accessible to the clientele, who are in need of information for their research. Special libraries have varieties of resources at its disposal, ranging from the primary, secondary, tertiary sources, library, catalogues, etc. The use of these resources does not seem to satisfy users as they leave the library premises dissatisfied and looking dejected. This is probably as a result of the library housing old and outdated resources, breakdown of the online facilities and other inadequate information that is not available.



Furthermore, studies have shown that Federal High Court libraries are faced with the dilemma of the poor management of information resources. The consequence of this can negatively affect the development of law, its interpretation, application and implementation and also affect the major instruments for legal advice, research and policy directives. The need for this study is to find out the provision and management of information resources in special libraries and information centers in North-east, Nigeria and suggest ways of improving these libraries so as to achieve the objectives of the parent institutions.

Research Objectives

The main objective of the study is to determine the management of information resources in Federal High Court Libraries in the North-east, Nigeria, while the specific objectives are to:

1. find out how the federal high court libraries in North-east, Nigeria provide information Resources to their users;
2. determine the procedures for the management of information resources in the Federal High Court Libraries; and
3. Identify the challenges associated with the provision and management of the information resources in the libraries under study.

Review of Related Literature

The aim of the Federal High Court Libraries is to make information resources available to the Judiciary through proper management. There is no human endeavor that does not require management for its proper functioning. All types of organizations, government establishments, business enterprises and, profit and non-profit making organizations require good management to function effectively. Managing is one of the most important human activities that permeate all organizations. It is charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the aim and objectives of the organization are realized (Nwachukwu, 2014). The author also defines management as “getting things done through and with others”. It is the process of reaching organizational goals by working with and through people, information and other organizational resources.

According to Haider (2017) Information management embraces all the generic concepts of management, including: planning, organizing, structuring, processing, controlling, evaluation and reporting of information activities, all of which is needed in order to meet the needs of those with organizational roles or functions that depend on information. McClure (2011) stated that “the overall purpose of information resources management is to determine how information resources can be harnessed more effectively and efficiently to meet the decision making and problem solving of today’s professionals”. Ugwu and Onyegiri (2013) stressed that it is a fact that these resources do not fly into the library or find themselves in the library by accident, rather, through a coordinated effort to select, acquire, catalogue and maintain them; which is what management of information resources in libraries is all about.

Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey and Frempong (2010) observed that the library’s effectiveness was traditionally measured in relation to the completeness and balance of the collection, the adequacy of acquisitions, cataloguing, etc. The provision of information resources entails selecting, acquiring, processing, preserving or storing and also providing the means by which users could get necessary information resources needed. According to Abdullahi (2017), the provision of information resources to a large extent is dependent upon the kind of library in question. The information resources provided by the various types of libraries are usually user oriented, that is, each library provides information targeted at satisfying the information needs of its unique community of users. With the advent of information communication technology (ICT), information may now be provided in various ways, sources and formats that are not necessarily restricted to the confines of a physical building or location



called 'the library'. For learning to take place, users must have access to information materials and resources no matter the format (Adeoye & Popoola, 2011).

A special library provides specialized information resources on a particular subject, serves a specialized and limited clientele and delivers specialized services to that clientele. Special libraries include corporate libraries, government libraries, [law libraries](#), [medical libraries](#), museum libraries, news libraries and [non-profit libraries](#) (Shumaker, 2009). Information provision in special libraries entails the various ways and means by which information professionals select, acquire, organize, store, retrieve and disseminate specialized information to targeted researchers and users of the library. It is in relation to this that Aju and Ape (2011) noted that a library is concerned with the acquisition, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination of recorded information for the purpose of reading, study and consultation through information services provision, which includes bibliography compilation, indexing, abstracting, selective dissemination of information, current awareness service, etc. which make it possible for researchers to access required information without delay from printed information resources.

Many studies have been carried out on the provision of information resources in special libraries. Saeed (2016) in his study on the provision and utilization of information resources in the libraries in Federal Ministries, revealed that reference, serial and circulation materials were substantially provided by the libraries, but were not adequately sufficient and there is lack of awareness of the resources and services, also lack of conducive atmosphere were the major constraints militating against the libraries. It is therefore sensible to claim that the quality of information resources acquired, organized, preserved and made available by any library is one of the key elements in the transition from a closed dictatorship to a democracy and a democratic nation and also efficient and effective judicial system (Okereke, Onayeya & Ogbuiyi, 2014). To accomplish their objectives, the Judiciary needs to make effective use of the library resources relevant to their work (Olorunfemi, 2012). Therefore, the provision in law libraries is tailored to the services of the law library, which include routing current law journals, selective dissemination of information, abstracting and indexing services, bibliographies and reading lists and reference services (Anyagou & Agidi, 2013).

Many studies have been conducted to determine the challenges confronting information resources provision and management in Federal High Court Libraries. For instance: a study by Osebequen, Wisdom and Ojokuku (2019) who stated that the major problem of information management and provision is, most of the expected roles of the special libraries were not being carried out by the libraries due to several factors such as; inadequate funding inadequate manpower; inadequate ICT facilities; outdated collection; poor maintenance culture; and negligence by management. Ladan (2014) identified some challenges such as lack of professional managers or librarians and lack of comprehensive and uniform management policy, judicial records were on paper or traditional format as well as inadequate space and storage facilities and lack of constant cleaning and fumigation of the resources. Furthermore, Umar and Sokari (2020) Implies that law libraries are still faced with challenges in the provision of library resources and services such as insufficient number of copies of books, non-availability of current resources, lack of organized information resources, lack of borrowing facilities for users, many of the information resources are not well displayed in the library, inadequate reading facilities, and many of the print resources are defaced. They further stated that, the implication of these challenges is that they cause law libraries to be left behind in modern library services and could therefore not be able to compete with those law libraries of the advanced countries.

Huffine (2014) stated that the problem of inadequacy and current legal information resources, especially those in digital formats, is the first and the major challenge facing the federal high court libraries in Nigeria. Their models of subscription were mostly the traditional method and they did not participate in consortium-based subscription for the provision of access to relevant legal information



resources. To support this, Owushi and Emasealu (2016) lament that law libraries which are supposed to be “store houses” of legal knowledge are now without up-to-date books and journals. Hence, they no longer perform their prime function of providing current materials for legal teaching and research. Another challenge is theft and mutilation of legal information resources in the law libraries.

In addition, Okereke, Onoyeyan and Ogbuiyi (2014) see inadequate and unqualified staff and insufficient space as a hindrance to the management of library information resources. Okereke, Onoyeyan and Ogbuiyi (2014) enumerated the factors that are capable of affecting adversely the use of library as: reading in an un-conducive environment, lack of written procedure and manuals that can direct non-trained library staff; resulting in the frequent miss-shelving of materials and a lack of commitment in doing desk work. The libraries of Federal high courts of north-east, Nigeria are primarily established to enhance effectiveness in the overall activity of their parent organizations. Therefore, the above-mentioned challenges would bring a setback in the realization of the general goals/objectives of the organization.

Methodology

The qualitative research method with narrative-based design was employed for this study. The population comprises all the staff in the five Federal High Court Libraries. Purposive sampling technique was adopted, as it was considered appropriate because the respondents were selected based on their experiences and understanding of the issue on ground and to be able to arriving at a clear conclusion. The instrument for data collection was the interview guide. A structured interview, developed by the researchers using the research questions as a benchmark, was administered on the heads of the libraries. The structured interviews guide was. The reason for using structured interview was to ensure that each interviewee is presented with exactly the same questions in the same order. Thematic data analysis approach was adopted for analyzing the collected data and this was in line with the research questions. It focuses on assigning of themes and codes to the participants within the data.

Results

A total number of five (5) heads of libraries from various libraries of the Federal High Court of North-eastern Nigeria were interviewed. The researcher coded the participants as: R1, R2, R3, R4 and R5, respectively. The response rate was 100%. The interview data were transcribed and presented based on the responses obtained from the interviews. All the librarians were experienced, hardworking and dedicated to their responsibilities. But not all had the proper educational background expected to meet library management requirements.

Research Question 1: What are the ways in which Federal High Court Libraries in North-eastern Nigeria provide information resources?

Respondents were asked the ways in which their respective libraries provide information resource, their responses revealed that the libraries completely depended on the federal government through the Federal high courts as their parent organizations and because of that, they had minimum control over the provision of the information resources, especially in terms of selection and acquisition, being controlled by the court management. In addition to that, R1 indicated that the libraries had adequate, current and relevant information resources for users but that they only lacked electronic information resources. Besides, the only job they performed in their libraries was to manage and organize those resources for easy access and use. R2 also revealed that the management hardly responded to their demands on time while R3 indicated that their information resources were sent directly from the headquarters; most of which were strictly legal and government publications.

Research Question 2: What are the procedures for the management of information resources in the Federal High Court Libraries?



The findings on the management procedures for information resources employed by the courts' libraries showed the criteria adopted by the libraries in respect of the organization of information resources, which involves the arrangement and revealed that they arranged their resources by considering the broad subject areas of a book. R1-R5 explained that they serially describe and arrange their information resources, which were done in accordance with the broad subject areas of each item. Also, they arranged their resources vertically based on their disciplines on the open shelves. R4 mentioned that they used traditional information organization processes without the provision of any class mark on the books for information location; while they arrange the resources based on its subject area.

The findings on the accessibility of information resources is another important issue showed that all the libraries did not have catalogue cards to ease accessibility; rather they provided indexes, which were in form of bulky books that provided accessibility to only a few of their resources, which was also a little bit difficult for users to use them without the help of the librarian. They also provided direct access to information resources, in which users were allowed to crosscheck the shelves for journals, magazines, textbooks or reference resources. This was allowed because the resources were not many due to their special nature; R1 indicated that for easy access, they provided direct services by providing tables of contents to judges. R2 and R3 also stated that they gave personal assistance to the users in search of information for easy access. They assisted the users to locate the materials and answered their queries as well as assisted them to borrow out books and information materials. R4 added that they provided access through providing the list of available resources, especially new arrivals, for identification and easy access to the information resources under custody. The findings also revealed that information resources were made accessible through the librarian's personal assistance and direct search on the shelf lists, which were the most available finding aids in the libraries.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges associated with the provision and management of information resources in the libraries under study?

The findings as regards to the challenges associated with the provision and management of information resources according to the participants were lack of adequate funding and lack financial autonomy. The librarians had no access to any funding allocated to their libraries, epileptic power supply, which affects the air conditioning in the libraries, shortage of manpower, lack of training and retraining of librarians, inadequate ICT facilities, placement of the library as a sub-unit under another unit of administration, lack of professional librarians, not recognizing the libraries as a unit by the management, lack of basic working facilities and lack of modern computing facilities. The findings also indicated that judicial records were on paper or traditional format. Inadequate space and storage facilities and lack of constant cleaning and fumigation of the records were also identified.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings with regards to the provision of information resources in Federal High Court Libraries, the findings revealed that the libraries completely depended on the federal government through the Federal high court as their parent organizations and because of that they had minimum control over the provision of the information resources, especially in terms of selection and acquisition, which was being controlled by the court management. The only job they performed in the library was to manage and organize those resources for easy access and use by users; most of the resources were strictly legal and government publications. This finding is contrary to that of Obinyan (2011), who confirmed in his study that the provision of information resources is a key function of any special library,



which entails selecting, organizing and disseminating available and relevant information resources both in print and non-print media in order to enable target users to have access to and use of the required information. The findings are also contrary to that of Obinyan (2011), who identified that libraries are responsible for acquiring and providing access to books, periodicals and other media to meet the educational, recreational and informational needs of their users.

The findings on the management procedures for information resources employed by the Federal High Court Libraries in North-eastern Nigeria revealed that they managed their resources through organization and preservation. The organization of information resources involve the arrangement of information resources that serially described and arranged vertically in accordance with the broad subject area of each item in open shelves without the provision of any class mark on the books for information location. The libraries do not have catalogue cards to ease accessibility; rather they provided indexes for some of the resources and also provide direct and personal assistance to users to ease access, and allowed them to borrow out books and information materials. They preserve information resources using chemical spray and insecticides, binding and rebinding some of the resources, proper air conditioning in the library and usage of limited lightning.

The findings as regards to the challenges associated with the federal high court libraries are inadequate funding, epileptic power supply, shortage of manpower and lack of training and retraining of librarians. These finding are consistent with those of Akinyemi (2017), who found that funding, obsolete library resources, epileptic power supply, scarcity of professional librarians, lack of technological know-how, non-conducive operational hours poor telecommunication facilities among the challenges affecting provision and management of information resources in Federal High Court. Adegboire (2010) also reported that the challenges the judiciary library faced are inadequate and qualified staff to man the libraries, lack of fund and a lack of a constant power supply. The constant electricity power supply is the backbone of virtual library, since the electricity power supply is required to power air conditioners, computer systems and make hardware and software work.

There is need for proper training and recruitment of professional librarians, oriented and training through attending workshops and seminars, provision of information communication technology (ICT) in the libraries. There is also need for the libraries to be well equipped with all the necessary library facilities, such as modern shelves and furniture and also steady power supply.

Conclusion

The study confirmed that the librarian in charge of the Federal High Court libraries in North-east, Nigeria geo-political zone had minimal control over the provision of information resources in terms of the selection and acquisition. The study also established procedures used for management of information resources which involved the arrangement of information resources that serially described and arranged vertically in accordance with the broad subject area of each item in open shelves without the provision of any class mark on the books for information location. The study therefore concludes that when legal practitioners have information resources to work with, it would lead to faster and speedier court processes, resulting to efficient and effective administration of justice.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following are recommended:

1. The federal high court librarians should be allowed to play a key role in the provision aspect of their library resources, such as the selection and acquisition of information resources. It is also recommended that adequate and current legal materials in both printed and non-print formats should be acquired to enhance effective and efficient legal practice in Nigeria.
2. The federal high court libraries should be introduced to a uniform standard of information resources organization procedures like cataloguing and classification, and the libraries should



also provide modern way of access to information as well as provide preservative measures to their information resources for proper utilization.

3. Budgetary allocation to federal high courts libraries should be enhances so as to provide relevant and adequate resources for effective and efficient library services.



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