



**THE USE OF LIBRARY RESOURCES AT THE NIGERIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED
LEGAL STUDIES BY THE RESEARCH FELLOWS FOR IMPROVED LIBRARY
SERVICES**

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ABSTRACT

This paper reported the findings of a study on the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies library use by the Institute Research Fellows. The main objective of the study was to determine the extent to which the Research Fellows of the Institute utilize the resources of the Institute Library. The study adopted a descriptive survey method of research. The population of the study was 54 Research Fellows in the Institute. The sample size is 20 (number of Research Fellows in Lagos Office). The major tool of data collection was a self-developed questionnaire, which was distributed among the Research Fellows in the Lagos Office of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. All the copies of the questionnaires distributed were retrieved. The findings of the study revealed that 30% of the Research Fellows visited the library often. Statutes were the most consulted resources (65%), followed by law reports and periodicals (60%). The most relevant of the resources consulted were also statutes (90%), followed by law reports (85%). Inadequate current materials and difficulty in accessing the Internet were the major obstacles for the use of the library. The paper recommended, among others, acquisition and subscription to current print and electronic databases, increased bandwidth of the Institute wireless network, improved aesthetics of the library and installation of adequate and functional air conditioners in the library to facilitate the provision of more relevant information by the library.

KEYWORDS: *Use, Library Resources, Research Fellows, Nigerian Institute of Advanced, Legal Studies, Improved Library Services*

Introduction

Traditionally, the library has been seen as the heart of the academic institution, a place of fundamental importance to every researcher, teacher and student. Today, library services are assuming a different dimension in philosophy, model and information delivery. The trend worldwide has proved that information provision and delivery had shifted from the traditional models to electronic and web-based formats (Fadehan & Ali, 2010). One of the laws of library science proposed by Ranganathan is allowing access to the use of library resources (Ogunmodede & Emeahara, 2010). Aina, Ogungbeni, Adigun & Ogundipe (2011) state that taking care of information needs of users entails the provision of physical, bibliographical and (electronic) access to information resources. It is therefore a necessity for all academic and research institutions to have well-equipped libraries (Fasola, 2015).

It is important to stress, at this juncture, that in as much as librarians strive to assist library users in locating relevant information resources in the library; users are also encouraged to meet the librarians for their information needs. Contacting the academic librarian, according to Cooper (2011) can help the researcher to:



- i. find the full text of an article you have only bits and pieces of;
- ii. see who is writing about a particular subject;
- iii. find news coverage of an event from historic times till today;
- iv. find a brief overview or in-depth scholarship about a subject;
- v. look at historic manuscripts, maps, writings, and images or footage, or find audio;
- vi. identify legislation, hearings, or other government publications about a subject plot and visualize data; and
- vii. follow a chain of research – conversations building on past research, and expanding it into the future.

The Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies Library

The Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies Library was established in 1979. The library is to provide equal access to timely and relevant legal information to judges, lawyers and paraprofessionals, so that they can be armed with knowledge in their pursuit of legal scholarship and dispensation of justice, and to strive and build a strong legal database and create viable services that will increase the knowledge of the library patrons, which will enhance their productivity in legal research and reforms. These will foster the overall mission of the Institute, which is to be the nucleus and hub of legal research and advanced studies in law in Nigeria. Since inception, the library has been providing relevant information resources to commensurate its mission and vision as well as that of the Institute. The library had witnessed tremendous growth in terms of size of collection. Today, the library has well over 50,000 collections and has subscribed to online databases such as LexisNexis, Law Companion and law Pavilion. The Law Companion has just been upgraded. The Institute has also subscribed to KOHA Integrated Library Management System and retrospective data conversion is on-going. Users are being directed to consult the OPAC for their search for library resources. The Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is opened to user between 8.00am to 6.00pm Monday to Friday.

The users of the library include Research Fellows of the Institute, Legal Practitioners, Judges, Law Lecturers, Law Researchers, LLM students, Law School students, Masters students in International Law and Diplomacy, undergraduate students referred by their faculties (usually given two or three days maximum to use the library for their research projects). The Institute Library has a total of ten professional librarians, three paraprofessionals and eight library attendants.

Statement of the Problem

Relevant print and electronic information resources are a sine qua non for effective and efficient legal research and study. The Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies Library has the mandate to provide and disseminate both print and non-print information materials to its teeming patrons, especially to the Institute Research Fellows. However, the researcher observed that Research Fellows' use of the Institute Library was inadequate. They are the primary patrons of the Institute library and must be seen to patronize the resources of the library more than any external user. The researcher also noted that the Research Fellows are not subjected to signing of attendance register at the entrance of the library as do other users. This register would have the measure for the utilization of the library by the various cadres of the Research Fellows. Therefore, this study is aimed at finding out the extent to which the Research Fellows of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies use the Library's print and electronic and proffers solutions for better usage and services.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to determine the extent to which the Research Fellows of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies utilize the resources of the Institute Library. Other specific objectives are to:

- (1) determine the frequency of use of the library by the research fellows;
- (2) ascertain the library's resources consulted by the research fellows during visit;
- (3) find out if the collection of the library meet the expectations of the research fellows;
- (4) ascertain the hindrances to the use of the library by the research fellows; and

(5) determine the means by which the library services can be improved upon.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

This study focused only on Research Fellows in Lagos Office of the Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. Abuja Research Fellows were therefore not considered. The reason being that the library used for the study is located in the Lagos Office and did not have a branch in Abuja.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study provided empirical evidence on the state of use of the Institute Library collection by the Institute Research Fellows. It also revealed the relevancy of the Library resources consulted to the research activities of the Research Fellows. Hindrances and means of improving the library services were brought to fore. The study was beneficial to the Institute Research Fellows, the Library Staff, other law libraries in Nigeria and beyond, who would use the recommendations of this study to provide and improve on the availability of print and electronic information resources in their libraries.

Review of Related Literature

The competence of a lawyer in all areas of practice demands a wide range of fundamental skills. For a lawyer to be able to analyze legal problems and perform legal research, the lawyer “has no other workroom or tool except the standard law library that is adequately stocked with the most current books, law reports, law periodicals and other research materials (Dada, 2011). Therefore, the indispensability of the law library to the successful practice, teaching and researching into law cannot be over emphasized. The law library acquires various relevant legal information resources (print and electronic resources) and employs competent staff to man them. Legal information resources can be divided into primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are authoritative records of the law made by making authorities, while secondary resources pertain to the law, but are not authoritative records of the law, that is they are not official texts (Tuhumwire & Okello-Obura, 2010).

Globalization driven by ICT is having a phenomenal impact on the acquisition of legal and relevant teaching, learning and research resources across the world. Many legal databases are now being used by many law schools, teachers and researchers across the world to access legal resources (Anyaegebu, Obiozor-Ekeze, Achfusi, & Aduaka, 2013). Through ICT lawyers, students and researchers can have access to current court proceedings/cases and law reports anywhere, any time and in any form. The Law Companion and Pavilion databases of the Institute provide current cases decided in superior courts of Nigeria. Wong and Webb (2011) state that libraries have long history of measuring their performance and impact on users. They report that as early as 1924, the American Library Association (ALA) prepared a practical guideline and tool for libraries to evaluate their services. They conducted a study on “uncovering meaningful correlation between student academic performance and library material usage among Hong Kong Baptist University students (2007-2009 sessions)”. The study showed that among the 48 valid sample groups, 31 sample groups (65%) were statistically proven to have a positive relationship between GPA of students and the usage of the library resources. It also found that different legal researchers visited the library to search for different resources, depending on the area of specialization of researcher.

Literature has affirmed that statutes are as important as case law. Never (2011) warns thus:

Case law is king. At least that's what a typical law school course wants you to believe. But crowning case law king of legal authority can be detrimental if it leads legal researchers to undervalue another essential authority—statutes. The fact is statutes govern much of what we do. We live in what one professor once called “the age of statutes.” At the state and federal levels, legislatures are producing law at ever-increasing levels. New areas of law are being legislated, and even old areas of law that used to be covered almost entirely by the common law, such as contracts and real property, are often now the topic of statutes. So, what does this all mean for you, the legal researcher? In short, it means that there's a good possibility that a statute applies to your issue—and you better find it. Even when you've found some good case



law on a topic, don't stop there. Always make sure you've covered your bases and take a look through the statutes. In fact, in certain situations it may be beneficial to start your research in the statutes and secondarily (gasp!) head to case law. (p. 1).

Furthermore, a research conducted on younger Americans reading habits by Zickuhr, Raine, Purcell, Madden, and Brenner (2012) show divergent perceptions of respondents with regard to library visit. A respondent said for instance "I go to the library branch to search for books that I can't get online, and I also go there to do some reading and discover any new books that the library has gotten in." Another respondent said "I actually go to the library more than I did before I had my e-reader". The study also identified the types of library resources consulted by respondents. One of the respondents said "I go to the library just as much as I used to and read just as much printed word as before. My e-reader is a last-resort, back-up deal for me. I need an electronic book while I'm flying because I love to read but a printed book in a plane makes me sick. Another example is that I am moving this week, and have been packing up my personal books and returning my library books, but I still want something to read. In that case, an e-book is invaluable". Another respondent said I still love books in print and will pick a print book over an e-book if I have the option . . . I would say I go to the library only slightly less than I used to."

However, in a progress report presented by Goodall and Pattern (2011) on academic library non/low use and undergraduate student achievement, it was found that there was a relationship between non/low use of the library and academic achievement of the students. The result was that "students who read more measured in terms of borrowing books and accessing electronic resources achieve better grade". Quadiri, Adetimirin and Idowu (2014) found that users used the e-resources in the library. The more the users use the library, the more familiar they will be with its resources, including its electronic resources. It also indicated that majority of the respondents from Babcock University 130 (65%) and Redeemer 48 (87%) indicated there was high need of Internet utilization, while also revealing low usage of online databases in the two institutions studied. Challenges identified from the study include: Poor Internet connectivity; Inability to access the available e-resources; Insufficient assistance from the library staff and Inadequate ICT skills. Osagie (2003) cited in Ogunmodede and Emeahara (2010) enumerates the motive behind library user education to include: enabling users to understand the classification scheme in the library so as to be able to locate materials; enabling the users to see the library catalogue (and or OPAC) as indexes to the entire collection and use them as such.

Methodology

This study was based on survey research method. Questionnaire was used to collect data complemented with personal observation. The questionnaire was structured into six sections to elicit responses on Demographics; Library use; Library resources consulted; Relevancy of resources consulted; Hindrances to the use of the resources and suggestions for improving the library services. The population of the study comprised all the fifty-two Research Fellows in Lagos and Abuja Offices. The sample population for the study is 20. This is the number of Research Fellows in Lagos Office of the Institute where the library is located. The questionnaire was used as the main instrument for data collection for the study. A total twenty copies of the questionnaires were administered and all retrieved.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Age range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-25 years	-	0
26-30 years	5	25
31-35 years	4	20
36-40 years	1	5
41 years and above	10	50
Total	20	100
Designation	Frequency	Percentage
Professor	1	5
Associate Professor	0	0
Senior Research Fellow	6	30
Research Fellow I	3	15
Research Fellow II	6	30
Assistant Research Fellow	4	20
Total	20	100

As presented in table 1 above , Research Fellows in the range of 41 years and above were the majority with 10 (50%), followed by the range 26-30 years with 5 (25%). The third range was those between 31-35 years of age, with 4 (20%). It also showed that only 1 respondent was in the professorial cadre representing 5%. It also revealed that majority of respondent were Senior Research Fellows and Research Fellow II representing 6 (30%). This was followed by assistant research fellows with 4 (20%).

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by visit to the library

Visit to the Library	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very often	5	25
Often	6	30
Seldom	5	25
Never	0	0
Occasionally	4	20
Total	20	100

Tables 2 showed that 6 (30%) of the respondents visited the library often. This was followed by respondents who seldomly visited the library and those who visited very often with 5 (25%). It also showed that there was no respondent who had not visited the library at all. This result confirms the findings of Zickuhr, et al (2012) that users visit the library for various reasons-to browse the shelves for new materials and to consult print materials.

Table 3: Library resources consulted during visit

Library Resources Consulted	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Statutes	13	65
2. Law Reports	12	60
3. Law Reviews	5	25
4. Periodicals	12	60
5. Textbooks	11	55
6. Reference Materials	7	35
7. Encyclopedia of Forms and Precedents	5	25
8. Law Companion	6	30
9. Law Pavilion	8	40
10. LexisNexis	2	10

11. Law Digest	2	10
12. Government Publications	4	20
13. OPAC	2	10

Table 3 revealed that statutes were the library resources that were mostly used by respondents with 13 (65%). This supports Never’s (2011) submission on the importance of statutes to legal practitioners. This was followed by law reports and periodicals with 12 (60%) each. This is in conformity with the view of the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting (2016) on the significance of law report to legal research and study. Textbooks were the third most consulted materials with 11 (55%). The table also revealed that LexisNexis, Law digest and the OPAC were the least consulted resources of the library with 5 (25%).

Table 4: Perception of relevancy of available library resources by respondents

Resources	VR	R	VI	I	Total	Percentage (%)
1. Statutes	12	6	-	-	18	90
2. Law Reports	9	8	-	-	17	85
3. Law Reviews	12	3	-	-	15	75
4. Periodicals	4	9	-	-	13	65
5. Textbooks	3	6	-	-	9	45
6. Reference Materials	2	8	-	-	10	50
7. Encyclopedia of Forms and Precedents	3	6	-	-	9	45
8. Law Companion	9	7	-	-	16	80
9. Law Pavilion	1	8	-	-	9	45
10. LexisNexis	6	7	-	-	13	65
11. Law Digest	12	2	-	-	14	70
12. Government Publications	12	1	1	-	14	70
13. OPAC	4	3	1	-	8	40

Table 4 showed that the most relevant of the resource consulted by respondents was statutes with 18 (90%). This supports Never’s (2011) submission on the importance of statutes to legal practitioners. This was followed by law reports with 17 (85%). This is in conformity with the view of the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting (2016) on the significance of law report to legal research and study. The library OPAC was among the least relevant of the resources (40%) and therefore among the least consulted by respondents (see table)

Table 5: Hindrances to the use of the library

Hindrances	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Lack/inadequate current resources	14	70
2. Library staff are not available to render assistance	2	10
3. Internet access is not readily available	14	70
4. OPAC interface is not user-friendly	3	15
5. I have personal link to legal databases	4	20
6. Library aesthetics is not conducive for reading	6	30
7. My office is more comfortable than the library	8	40
8. Any other obstacle? Please specify	2	10

As shown in Table 5, obstacles hindering the use of the library were inadequate current materials and difficulty in accessing the internet (70%). This is in conformity with the findings of Quadiri, Adetiminri and Idowu (2014) that poor Internet connectivity and inability to access e-resources were among the obstacles inhibiting the use of library. This was followed by uncomfortable nature of the library as respondents prefer their offices to the library (30%). Library aesthetics was not also conducive for reading (40%). The table also revealed that library staffs were always available to assist users (10%). Inconsistency of power supply and the library smelling moldy and dusty were

pointed by two Respondents as factors affecting effective usage of the resources. These also represented 10% of the obstacles militating against the library use.

Table 6: Suggestions to improve the use of library resources

Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Acquisition of current Resources	18	90
Improved Internet accessibility	18	90
Improved user education campaigns	11	55
Staff should assist user in retrieving resources	10	50
Improved library aesthetics	10	50
Any other suggestions?	3	15

Table 6 showed that acquisition of current library resources and improved Internet accessibility are key to improvement of library services and the use of library by respondents with 18 (90%). This also confirms the findings of Quadiri, Adetiminri and Idowu (2014) that poor internet connectivity and inability to access e-resources were among the obstacles inhibiting the use of library. Equally important are user education campaigns (55%), continuous assistance to users by library staff in retrieving library materials and improved aesthetics of the library (50%).

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research has affirmed that law reports, statutes and textbooks are vital to legal research and study as majority of the respondents indicated that they consulted statutes (65%), law reports (60%), law periodicals (60%) and textbooks (55%) for their research. It has also negated the assertion that the Research Fellows were not making use of the library adequately as it has shown that majority of them visited the library often. It further confirmed that the emergence of ICT, which made information to be accessed remotely, has affected negatively the frequency at which users visit the library. Thus, legal databases were the least utilized. The few that visited the library complained of either poor internet connectivity or erratic power supply which inhibits adequate access to e-resources. Based on the various findings of this research, the paper therefore recommends that the Institute should:

1. intensify efforts, within its powers, to acquire and subscribe to more current print and electronic databases;
2. increase the bandwidth of the wireless network to ensure speedy access and retrieval of electronic information resources;
3. make the library more conducive for reading by improving its aesthetics (this can be done through the provision of modern reading chairs and tables and installation of air conditioners) to facilitate reading;
4. formalize a Memorandum of Understanding with the Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (IALS) London as did Ghana Institute of Advanced Legal Studies (GIALS). The advantage of the Understanding can tremendous both in the area of training of staff and collection development;
5. assistance giving to the users by the library staff should be improved. Improved assistance will lead to improved usage and satisfaction of the users.

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