

Original Research Article

The Assessment of Information Resources and Services in Ministry of Justice Law Library Jalingo, Taraba State Nigeria

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Abstract

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This study was designed to examine the assessment of information resources and services in Taraba state Ministry of Justice Law library, Jalingo. A brief history of the Taraba State Ministry of Justice and its library was traced. To provide background information, a review of related literature was carried out. Data collection includes questionnaires, documentary sources, and personal observation at the library. Data generated were analyzed using simple percentages in tabular form. Finding showed that the services of the library fell short of what is expected of a library supporting program run it parent institution, largely because of inadequate services, insufficient space and inadequate services. The study recommended that adequate funds should be provided to the library to enable the acquisition of materials and facilities, and adequate resources to perform its functions effectively. The study also recommended that a new building should be set up to meet the holdings and space needed for the users.

Keywords: Assessment, Fund, Information resources, Ministry of justice, Services, Taraba state

INTRODUCTION

Law library is one of the special libraries that stocks legal documents to assist the activities of legal practitioners. Ministry of justice refers to the ministry responsible for all legal matters of Taraba State Government. Jegede (1998) said: "the early law library in Nigeria sprung up in Lagos. The colonial Government of Nigeria discovered the usefulness of the libraries in the development of Government and establish some, thus making Law libraries the first to be established" the early law library was possibly a one room library serving lawyers, magistrates and judges located in the court house at Tinubu square around 5th April, 1977; when the court house was opened by justice Marshall. This library formed part of what is now known as high court of Lagos state library at Tafawa Balewa square.

With the establishment of Taraba State in 1991, the

Ministry of Justice was established the same year and a library was attached to the Ministry with a few collections from the former Gongola State ministry of Justice library, Yola. The library was set up with an initial collection of 1,664 and a seating capacity of eight (8) users. With these collections, the library has been gradually developing, though at a low pace due to lack of adequate funds for aggressive selection and acquisition of materials and other problems such as lack of adequate space and effective services to users. However, significant development has been witnessed from the date of establishment in 1991 to date, especially in terms of the library collection which now stands at 6,358 and a seating capacity of forty (40) users' at a time. The Taraba State Ministry of justice law library, like other law libraries in Nigeria, is set up to cater for information needs of the

legal professional of the ministry. It is basically centered on acquisition, preservation, retrieval and dissemination of recorded knowledge.

Statement of the Problem

There are three (3) major areas that prompted the researcher to examine the information resources and services in Taraba State Ministry of Justice Law library, Jalingo. The areas of concern are lack of adequate resources, effective services and accommodation. It is on this ground that the researcher wishes to investigate the causes of such problems that inhabit the smooth growth of information resources and service of the library to enhance its future development.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study is aimed at achieving the following objectives

1. Identify the problems facing the library development in terms of information resources and services.
2. Highlight the use of information resources and services in Taraba State Ministry of Justice Law library.
3. Identify or access the availability of the Justice Law library information resources and services.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What is the extent of services provided by the library?
2. What is the extent of information resources provided by the library?
3. What are the problems inhabiting the acquisition of information resources?
4. How adequate is the library accommodation?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is hoped that this study would examine, analyze and shed considerable light on the availability of information resources and services of Law library in the development of Taraba State Ministry of Justice. The study is also expected to allow other potential researchers to undertake further studies on other Law libraries in Nigeria so as to come up appropriate suggestions for improvement.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

“A literature review is a process of searching for and going over academic or scientific works already done on

similar problems by same authors or other authors in order to describe the procedures followed or to expose the strength and weakness of such work as well as to justify the need for another study”. Fajonyomi (2003)

The law library is to provide research and legal information to the legislatures as well as to federal courts and executive agencies, and to offer reference service to public. Law libraries are all Law libraries of Ministries, libraries for judges, high courts, magistrate courts libraries, university law libraries and any libraries dealing with law subjects. Acchetabu (1979)

According to Omo-osagie (1981) he described the activities of the Nigerian association of law libraries which was established in 1925 to ensure law libraries represent the legal potentials of a nation. He also said “law libraries are the store house and depository of all the law from every source and in various forms. Gilbert (1908-1913) asserted that there is no class of men professionals or otherwise as depend upon textbooks as lawyers, there is nature which so directly pertains to the interest which it is to design to serve as the law library. Gilbert further said that “for a law library to be able to meet the needs of such a book, intensive and decent information, conscious profession must at all times be seen to be relevant, current and comprehensible in both quality and quantity.

The study tend to ascertain the service rendered in the law libraries to ensure the smooth running of the library and information centers service (LICS) and targeted at the patrons to enable them meet their information needs which include the provision of various resources and programs to the members of the users community. These services rendered by the law library includes: technical services, circulation services, reference services and current awareness services. Law books are the first essential materials in any law library collection. They are usually in form of law report, law journals, gazettes, statutes, textbooks on various reference materials such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, digest, directories, and bibliographies and so on. These materials are becoming very expensive and libraries cannot afford to acquire multiple copies to meet the demand, especially in the institutional law libraries. Ude (1997)

The reference unit is to library services what intelligence unit is to the military. An index is a systematic guide to the text of reading materials or to the contexts of other document. A law library may decide to index information items scattered in the wider range of primary information sources. Shores (1954)

The law collections should include the basic frequently used and potentially useful materials such as reports, statutes and volumes of legal periodicals. These, however must be continually evaluated by the librarians. Since the law library as an institution exists to provide the above mentioned materials, it is therefore the function of the librarians to assemble and make available these printed materials easily available to all library users

Table 1. Biographical Data

Age	Frequency	Percentage
20-25	5	12.5
25-40	20	50
40 and above	15	37.5
Total	40	100%

Table 2. Services provided by the library.

Services	NO	To large extent	To moderate extent	To low extent
Charging and discharging	40	5	0	5
Reference services		0	5	10
Inter-library lending		0	0	10
Photocopy services		0	0	0
Serials services		0	0	5
Total		5	5	30

inclusive of students, practicing lawyers and also researchers and judges as well. Okewusi (1997)

“Knowledge is power” could be harnessed through reading of good books. Members of the law profession habitually read a lot; they are usually excited about the discovery of any good law materials. “To the lawyers the law library is a treasure, in fact; it is to him what the laboratory is to the scientist”. Lawyers in whatever branch of the profession have great need for legal information and assistance in retrieving their information requirement because of the vast nature of the discipline. Efforts therefore should be made toward comprehensive coverage of legal materials in all spheres of the law discipline cutting across materials on Nigerian legal system as well as other very important nations of the world. Igwebuike (1997)

Library collection/materials are changing rapidly as more resources do not mean that print resources will disappear. In fact, some resources would be best in print format; others will be developed in electronic format and will never be published in print. This possesses two fold challenges to libraries: to compare similar materials in different formats and decide which formats are best for their library and to select the best materials available. Cassell (1999)

Libraries do not have the right to impose their views about what is best to their readers. Readers should be provided with what they will use and not with materials that will sit on the shelves unread. If users financially support the library, they have the right to participate in the selection of the library stock. Giving people exactly what they want to ensure that they read, this help in building important reading habits. Broadus (1981).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey research design was employed to examine the

existing collection, services and accommodation of the Taraba State Ministry of Justice Law library with a view to obtain the necessary data that are required for the study. A survey research design or method concerned with chronological description of past events as well as the present event (Fajoyemi, 2003).

The target population was seventy (70) staff members as well as legal practitioners in the ministry of justice. The entire target population was used, therefore there was no sampling used for selecting the sample population. Research instrument was used for data collection in this study. Structured questionnaire was used as instrument for collection from the respondents. Data collection through questionnaire instrument was analyzed using frequency count and percentage display in tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Shows 5(12.5%) of the respondents were between the age range of 20-25 years, 20(50%) respondents were of the range of 25-40 year, while 15(37.5%) respondents were in the range category of 40 years and above.

Table 2 shows that 30(75%) respondents agreed to low extent, and 5(12.5%) respondents indicated to large extent and to moderate extent respectively. Therefore, the analysis revealed that the extent of the provision of services was low.

Table 3 shows that, 25 (62.5%) respondents agreed to low extent, and 10(25%) respondents indicated to moderate extent, while 5(12.5%) respondents agreed to large extent. Therefore, the analysis revealed that the extent of information resources provided was low.

Table 4 shows that 10(25%) respondents rated lack of resources as factors militating against provision of information resources and services; 15(12.5%) responded lack of gazettes while 7(17.5%) respondents

Table 3. Extent of information resources provided

Resources	No	To large extent	To moderate extent	To low extent
Textbooks	40	3	5	10
Law report		2	0	5
Reference books		0	5	0
Serials		0	0	10
Government publication		0	0	0
Total		5	10	25

Table 4. Problems inhabiting provision of information resources.

Factors	NO	Yes	No
Lack of resources	40	10	0
Lack of fund		15	0
Lack of staff		3	0
Lack of gazettes		5	0
Lack of law report		7	0
Total		40	0

Table 5. Rating of library accommodation.

Building	NO	To large extent	To moderate extent	To low extent
Space	40	0	0	25
Chairs		0	5	0
Table		5	0	0
Air conditioned		0	0	5
Total		5	5	30

agreed to lack of law reports. Therefore, finding revealed that lack of fund which constitutes the highest percentage of the respondent is a major problem in Taraba State Ministry of justice law library which militates against the provision of information resources and services in the library.

Table 5 shows that 30(75%) of respondents agreed to low extent of space and conduciveness, and 5(12.5%) respondents indicated to large extent and moderate extent respectively.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study has attempted to access the extent of information and services provided by Taraba State Ministry of Justice Law Library, Jalingo. In this study, efforts have been made to point out, to a large extent, on three factors. The importance and largeness of the library information resources, the competence of staff to acquire and organized the materials making up the collection and to assist in their retrieval and more crucial is the fund availability to the library for maintenance of services and continued growth, are usually problems that faced

individual in the developing countries and Nigeria in particular.

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations are made for improvement:-

1. The library should endeavor to provide services to high extent in order to provide effective services in Ministry of Justice Law Library, Jalingo Taraba State.
2. The Library management should endeavor to provide information resources to high extent in Ministry of Justice Law Library, Jalingo Taraba State.
3. The library should endeavor to provide adequate funding for the acquisition of information resources in Ministry of Justice Law Library, Jalingo Taraba state.
4. The library management should endeavor to provide accommodation with adequate space to high extent in Ministry of Justice Law Library, Jalingo Taraba State.

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