

Availability of Policies and Information Resources in the Legislative Libraries of State Houses of Assembly in Nigeria

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Abstract

Availability of policies and information resources were believed to remain the hubs through which legislative libraries could achieve their objectives of meeting the information needs of legislators. This paper investigated the availability of policies and information resources in the legislative libraries of State Houses of Assembly in Nigeria. The population of the study was (31) librarians from which a sample was drawn based on geo-political zones. Purposive sampling technique was used to select (12) librarians. Unstructured interview was used to collect data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. Findings of the study showed that only three libraries had a written policy, while majority (9) used the unwritten policy. The result showed that different types of information resources were available but mostly in print format in all the libraries. It is concluded from the study that legislative libraries that provide information services base on policy guidelines were better than those that did not. Hence, adoption of policies would make it easier for the legislative libraries in most cases to provide information resources in line with the legislators' information requirement. The study recommended among others, the need for strict policy by all the legislative libraries. This is because the existence of documented polices would positively improve the services they rendered to legislators.

Keywords: Legislative Libraries, Policies, Information Resources, State Houses of Assembly.

Introduction

Legislative libraries are expected to satisfy the legislative demands of parliamentarians within the very shortest possible time. The significance of legislative libraries in promoting the activities carried out by legislators are crucial as they play a very paramount role in the legislative process. Thus, policies are considered to be the foundation often which legislative libraries may rely upon to

operate successfully, because this will ensure efficient and effective provision and management of information resources. Accordingly, policies set up by legislative libraries are viewed as the blueprints that are targeted to influence the smooth running of entire operations of the library. Creating good guiding policies and adhere with them by legislative libraries will create an enabling environment for the libraries to provide information resources that can satisfy the information needs of legislators. But the most important is for the libraries to make sure that they develop policies that guide them to handle library operations appropriately. Provision should be made in the policies to give room for the amendment of the policies as the need arises.

Statement of the Problem

Legislative libraries are the recognized institutions saddled with the responsibilities of providing and managing information resources in any legislative institution. Moreover, legislative libraries need to be guided by policies in for them to achieve their goals of ensuring the availability different types of information resources in these libraries. Thus, operational policies of this category of libraries need to cover both types of the format of the information resources. This is because it is a fact that policies that are meant for print information resources cannot adequately take care of non-print resources as both types of resources need to be treated based on its own intricacies. However, the policies could be written, unwritten or both depending on how libraries make their policies to be. The most important is for the libraries to make sure that they develop policies that guide them to handle library operations properly. It is against this background, this study investigated availability of policies and information resources in the legislative libraries of State Houses of Assembly in Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Policies are found to be important components to the effective management of information resources provided by libraries. In this regard, Thomas-Osula (2019) “noted that the availability of policies is often considered a useful decision in guiding legislative libraries in their efforts to manage information resources” Policies are therefore the bedrock often which legislative libraries may rely upon to function appropriately. This also prove that initiatives regarding to the operations in legislative libraries needed to be carried out according to the policies plans which may in turn reduce the risk of the obstructions that may confront them in the coming years. In fact, without adequate and quality information resources in different formats, libraries may not be able to achieve their desire of meeting the information needs of their patrons.

In their own opinion, Bitagi and Garba (2014) acknowledged that “information resources constitute a range of materials and equipment gathered by a library in order to meet the information needs of both intended and anticipated users”. The value of the types of information resources available in legislative libraries lies in its contribution to the performance of legislators. Legislative libraries exist to satisfy the information needs of legislators for effective legislative process. According to Adelusi and Attahiru (2012), information resources could be described as books, materials; microforms and electronic information materials capable of meeting information needs of users. Accordingly, meeting the information needs of users is determined by the use of the available types of information resources by the library. In this context, Ofori-Dwumfuo and Addo (2012) in their findings of a study on the Utilization of Information and ICT Resources by Parliamentarians in Ghana revealed that the perception of types of information resources by parliamentarians indicated majority 34 (42.0%) perceived the types as all published and unpublished materials.

Research questions

The following were the research questions that guided the study;

1. What are the policies on the management of information resources in legislative libraries of State Houses of Assembly in Nigeria?
2. What types of information resources are available in the legislative libraries under study?

Methodology

The study used qualitative approach and exploratory research design was adopted. The population of this study was (31) librarians of the State Houses of Assembly in Nigeria from which a sample was drawn based on geo-political zones. Purposive sampling techniques was used to select a sample of (12) librarians from Adamawa P1, Gombe P2, Nasarawa P3, Niger P4, Kaduna P5, Zamfara P6, Ebonyi P7, Enugu P8, Lagos P9, Ogun P10, Bayelsa P11 and Edo P12 State Houses of Assembly. Unstructured interview was used to collect data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

Table 1.1:Background Information of Participants

S/N	Codes/ Participants	State houses of assembly	Gender	Educational qualifications	Working experiences	Rank	Date and time of the interview
1	P1	Adamawa	Male	BLS	14 Years	Assistant Chief Librarian	12-09-2017 11:15am- 12:08pm.
2	P2	Gombe	Male	BLS	21 Years	Assistant Director	14-09-2017 11:05am- 11:53am.

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3	P3	Nasarawa	Female	BLS	18 years	Senior Librarian	19-09-2017 1:37pm- 2:31pm.
4	P4	Niger	Male	BLS	14 Years	Principal Librarian	21-09-2017 11:09am- 11:58am.
5	P5	Kaduna	Female	BLS	15 Years	Principal Librarian	7-08-2017 11:15am- 12:42pm.
6	P6	Zamfara	Male	BLS	34 Years	Chief Librarian	14-08-2017 10:35am- 11:32am.
7	P7	Ebonyi	Male	BLS	25 Years	Assistant Chief Librarian	3-10- 20172:10pm- 3:05pm.
8	P8	Enugu	Male	BLS	19 Years	Chief Librarian	5-10-2017 12:15pm- 1:08pm.
9	P9	Lagos	Male	BLS	20 Years	Chief Librarian	28-08-2017 12:02pm- 12:56pm.
10	P10	Ogun	Male	BLS	21 Years	Assistant Director	30-08-2017 10:34am- 11:28am.
11	P11	Bayelsa	Male	BLS	30 Years	Assistant Director	16-10-2017 11:20am- 12:15pm.
12	P12	Edo	Male	BLS	18 Years	Chief Librarian	18-10-2017 1:05am- 1:52pm.
Total	12	12		=	=	==	===

KEY:

- P1: Librarian Adamawa State House of Assembly
P2: Librarian Gombe State House of Assembly
P3: Librarian Nasarawa State House of Assembly
P4: Librarian Niger State House of Assembly
P5: Librarian Kaduna State House of Assembly
P6: Librarian Zamfara State House of Assembly
P7: Librarian Ebonyi State House of Assembly
P8: Librarian Enugu State House of Assembly
P9: Librarian Lagos State House of Assembly
P10: Librarian Ogun State House of Assembly
P11: Librarian Bayelsa State House of Assembly
P12: Librarian Edo State House of Assembly

BLS: Bachelor of Library Science

Table 1.1 shows that all the librarians covered by the study participated. The study shows that they all had Bachelor degrees in Library Science and spent between 14-

34 years working in the libraries. The interview results further indicated that most of them were senior officers in management of their libraries. In terms of their gender, majority 90% were male with only a few females who worked in the state assembly libraries. By implication, all the participants possessed the required capacity to respond diligently to the interview.

Findings

Availability of Policies on the Management of Information Resources

Table 1.2 Overview of Interview on Policies Used for the Management of Information Resources

S/N	Libraries	Written Policy	Un written Policy
1.	ADAMAWA (P1)	√√	=
2.	GOMBE (P2)	√√	=
3.	EBONYI (P3)	=	√√
4.	ENUGU (P4)	=	√√
5.	BAYELSA (P5)	=	√√
6.	EDO(P6)	=	√√
7.	KADUNA (P7)	=	√√
8.	NASARAWA(P8)	=	√√
9.	NIGER(P9)	√√	=
10.	LAGOS(P10)	=	√√
11.	OGUN (P11)	=	√√
12.	ZAMFARA(P12)	=	√√

The result showed that participants P1, P2 and P4 had written policies for the management of information resources in their libraries. P1 stated that “the library has written policies that cover all its activities related to the management of information resources and other activities”. P2 noted that “for a very long time this library has been operating based on documented policy. Therefore, management of the collections was being guided by the policy”. P4 stated that “our library sometimes ago proposed the adoption of policy and the management approved it. So, handling of information resources is in line with the provision of the approved document”.

The result further showed that P3, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11 and P12 reported that their libraries had no written policies for the management of information resources but they operated based on informal guidelines. P3 stated that, “I know that the library has no written policy but our resources are being managed based on informal practices”. P5 reported that, “As a fact this library operates in law-making environment but unfortunately it has no documented policy”. Narration from participant P6 was that, “Policy issue is always being politicized in most cases. But I don’t believe we have any written policy in use here, may be in the future”. P7 stated that, “It would have been easier if this library had written policies to guide its

services, but regrettably it has none". P8 viewed that, "For now we do not have written policy". P9 stated that, "Quite sure policies are very important ingredient for the development of any library, but I can tell you that in our own case we are lacking in that". P10 noted that, "This is a very critical question, the working condition in this political environment can't allow the library to have written policies for its activities. So, our operations are guided by un written policies". P11 viewed that, "Actually, we find it very difficult to carry out many of our services due to the lack of written policies you are talking about". P 12 opined that, "In this library, we don't have any written policy. Why? because of lack of support from the management".

Furthermore, by implication, libraries that manage their information resources strictly based on the provision of the documented policies may be able to meet the information needs of legislators. This is because compliance with the provision of the policies will obligate the authorities of such libraries to manage their information resources based on the set-out criteria in the policies.

Availability of Information Resources

Participant P1commentated that, "Our resources include books, encyclopaedias, debates, acts, bills, handbooks, Laws of the Federation, Constitutions and many more that you can see and we have Internet". Interview P2 viewed that, "Materials in this library are mostly books but we have journals, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, maps, handbooks, acts, votes and proceedings, newspapers, constitution, Laws of the Federation and audio-visual materials". The expression of P3 was that, "We have resources such as newspapers, books, handbooks, bills, debates, Laws of the Federation, yearbooks, encyclopedias, maps etc. P4 commented that, "Newspapers, books, handbooks, constitution, order papers, maps, atlases, audio-visual materials, debates, bills, acts and many more materials are available in this library". The response of P5 was that, "In this library we have information resources such as books, encyclopedias, reports, periodicals, gazettes, government publications, seminar papers, debates, bills, votes and proceeding, etc".

In the view of P6, "The library provides conference reports, encyclopedias, books, vote and proceedings, debates, government materials, newspapers, bills and acts. Interviewee P7 noted that, "Our collection includes encyclopedias, magazines, handbooks, newspapers, yearbooks, atlas, dictionaries, reports, budgets, reports, books, manuals, gazettes, bills, acts, votes and proceedings of the house and debates. The verbal expression of Participant P8 was that, "As you can see most of our materials are in print form. We have books, newspapers, magazines, Laws of the federation, law reports, seminar reports, handbooks, debates, acts, bills, vote and proceedings, order paper, government documents, encyclopedias and so on. P9 interview reported that, "You know our collections are not different with the

collections that you can find in other legislative libraries. They include debates, text books, encyclopedias both general and subject, magazines, Laws of the Federation, constitutions, law reports, newspapers, handbooks, gazettes, bills, acts and many more that you can see by yourself". Interview response of P10 was that, "Various types of information resources that include handbooks, books, magazines, Laws of the Federation, constitution, debates, conference papers, committee reports, newspapers, atlas, maps, bills, acts, encyclopedias are all available in this library". The response from interviewee P11 was that, "Actually our resources cover different endeavours. We stocked resources like hand books, newspapers, bills, debates, acts, magazines, government publications, books, encyclopedias, journals, conference papers etc. P12 noted that, "This is a special library attached to the legislature, and you should expect its resources to be special in nature. Ok, we have books, debates, acts, newspapers, journals, encyclopedias, handbooks, committee reports, conference papers, gazettes, yearbooks, government documents, magazines, bills, order papers, vote and proceedings, among others".

Discussion of Findings

Availability of Policies on the Management of Information Resources

The findings revealed the existence of ground rules that covered for the management of information resources in the three out of the twelve libraries covered by the study. In this vein, Thomas-Osula (2019) noted that the availability of policies is often considered a useful decision in guiding legislative libraries in their efforts to manage information resources. This finding shows clearly the relevance of adopting appropriate documented policies for the management of information resources. By implication, the policy could be seen to denote a general statement containing the underlying principles, regulations and rules that govern decisions on how to manage information resources in the legislative libraries. Thus, documented policies are an important factor that needs to be considered in the smooth operations of legislative libraries that is worth its name.

However, the management of information resources in the majority of the libraries covered in the study was guided by un-written policies, as indicated from the interview data. This finding is similar to that of Yahaya, Abubakar and Abdullahi (2017), who studied the management of electronic information resources in Federal University Libraries of North West Zone of Nigeria. Their results revealed that "all the ten participants of federal university libraries indicated that their institutions do not have any written policy for management of electronic information resources". This finding supports the assumption that, in the absence of written policy for the management of information resources, it would be very difficult for legislative libraries to comply and systematically execute library operations appropriately. It could be established that non-availability of written

policies in the affected libraries might be attributed to the fact that the data collected on the background information of the librarians shows that they all had Bachelor degrees. In addition, majority were not at the top management level of decision making except those of Gombe, Ogun and Bayelsa that rose to the rank of Assistant Directors.

Availability of Information Resources

The result found out that the libraries under study provided various types of information resources that included books, dictionaries, manuals, handbooks, encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines, debates, acts, audio-visual facilities, etc. Only one legislative library indicated the availability of Internet facility. This finding conforms to the literature establishing that legislative library provide both published and unpublished information resources. Ofori-Dwumfuo and Addo (2012) in their findings of a study on the Utilization of Information and ICT Resources by Parliamentarians in Ghana revealed that the perception of types of information resources by parliamentarians indicated majority 34 (42.0%) perceived the types as all published and unpublished materials. Thus, findings of the present study support the assumption that the availability of different types of information resources in the legislative libraries is meant to enable the legislators to use the varied information they require based on need. On this note, Osman and Dankwah (2014), who studied Information Use in Decision Making and reported that 89% of the legislators needed available types of information resources to equip them for parliamentary debate, 86% needed them to broaden their knowledge, 75% stated that they needed information to clarify the concept of bill under discussion, 74% needed the information resources to gain insight on issues that were being discussed on the floor of parliament, so that they could contribute effectively to debate and only 38% revealed they needed types information resources for budget debates. By implication, this finding proved that the availability of different types of information resources in the legislative libraries may determine the quality of information users can access from such resources.

Despite the importance of information and communication technology facilities, interview responses with the majority of the participants reported the unavailability of such facilities in their legislative libraries. Their views indicated that print dominated the collection of their libraries. The finding is similar to the study conducted by Sa'eed (2016) on the provision and utilization of information resources in libraries of Federal Ministries, Abuja, which revealed that there was a high provision of printed information resources in the libraries and very low in the area of non-print information resources. It is evident, from the result of the interview that only one participant reported the availability of Internet facility while seven participants confirmed the availability of audio-visual facilities. This might cause

low usage of library information resources by the legislators. Abubakar and Mohammad (2014) studied the Role of Library in Legislative Business in the Niger State House of Assembly and reported that (25%) of the respondents revealed that inadequate Internet facilities militated against the effective use of library services.

Consequently, literature proved that the vital role information and communication technologies and specifically electronic information resources play in the provision of effective information service delivered nowadays made it necessary for libraries to incorporate them in their operations. Accordingly, in today's world, acquiring, organizing and integrating parliamentary and external information sources in a way that enables the creation of a knowledge base and specific services for the legislature may not be achieved unless the full potential of information and communication technologies are achieved. Legislative libraries have a number of opportunities to use electronic information resources and other technologies to improve their services in a way that benefits the whole institution (Balnaves, 2012). This shows that electronic information resources and other information and communication technology facilities are, if not a unique opportunity for legislative libraries in Nigeria, at least they are incomparable instruments in a number of ways. However, the non-availability of electronic types of information resources could be attributed to the non-existence of policies that will guide the management process of information resources in the legislative libraries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The conclusion drawn from the findings of this study is that application of policies would make it easier for the legislative libraries in most cases to provide the needed types of information resources and to appropriately carry out other library operations. It is recommended that there is the need for the strict adoption of written policies by all the legislative libraries. This is because it is only through adherence to documented policies laid down by the libraries that appropriate information resources could be provided and managed for use by legislators. This is because lack of such policies in one way or the other will make it possible for such libraries not to effectively and efficiently provide information services to legislators.

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