

INFORMATION NEEDS AND SERVICES OF LEGISLATORS IN LEGISLATIVE LIBRARIES IN NORTH CENTRAL STATE OF NIGERIA IN A RECESSED ECONOMY

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Abstract

The aim of the study is to examine information needs and services of legislators in legislative libraries in North Central State of Nigeria in a recessed economy. The study was directed by three objectives, three research questions. The study adopted descriptive research design. The population for the study was one hundred and fifty-four (154) legislators from the six (6) State Houses of Assembly in North Central Nigeria. The entire population of legislators were adopted for the study. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Frequency, percentages, Mean and standard deviation were used for data analysis. Findings from the study revealed that the information needs of the legislators is mostly on legislatives matters, constituency matters, laws and the Constitution etc. While information services rendered to the legislators are References services, Current Awareness Services, Selection Dissemination Services, Research Services, etc. The challenges faced by the legislators. Were unavailable resources and services of the library that will cater for the information needs of the legislators, improving the knowledge and skill of the legislators through user education programs and contractors handling the building of the house of assembly complex should be advised to centrally locate the library building so that the users of the library can easily walk into the library from their various offices.

Keywords: Information needs, Services, Legislators, Recessed Economy, North Central

Introduction

Legislature is a deliberative body of persons, usually elective, who are empowered to make, change, or repeal the laws and policies of a society, state or country (David, 2015). Legislative arm of government is one of the three division of government that work in conjunction with Executive and Judicial arms of government, legislative arm's main responsibilities are the law-making activities for the peace, order and good governance.

Legislator is defined as a member of parliament who is either elected by the people or appointed by the Executive. Legislators are elected to make laws and policies for good governance of a state or country (Bluwey, 2012). According to Epiphany (2013) the unique position of the legislators as representatives of their constituents expose them readily to the needs of the populace. Hence, some writers refer to them as the society errand boy or post office where the burning desires of the people are deposited for government's attention. Okoye (2006) stated that the importance of the legislature cannot be over emphasized, without the legislator it is not possible to have a functional democracy for they are the eyes, the ear and the voice of the people in representative democracy.

Libraries as service-oriented institutions/organizations provide information resources and services to individuals, groups, associations, and organizations to meet their information needs. Thus, libraries differ in terms of types, parental organizations/institutions establishing them, users' desire, resources and services preparation, and nature of their clients, but still the basic understanding concept and purpose of every library is to ensure that clients get easy access to the information they need, to function more effectively.

From the above definitions of library, it could be inferred that for the legislators' to effectively function well in the business of law making and policies, the legislators need to be supported with legislative library. In Nigeria, legislative libraries have been part and parcel of the institutional framework for law making. "There has always been National Assembly Library as well as State Houses of Assembly Libraries with every emerging civilian administration. Legislative libraries are synonymous with Parliamentary Libraries as these categories of collections are as old as Parliamentary institutions" (Dada, 2005).

In addition, Aligrudic (2009) maintained that "Parliamentary Libraries are the special libraries belonging to the institutions of the highest state of importance, as they have very strict circle of clients". The author further submitted that, "the Parliamentary library's aim is to support and facilitate parliamentary activities and make available all the useful sources of information to the Parliament as a whole. Thus, a Parliamentary library is a specialized library from the point of view of the collections' coverage and of patrons whom it is intended for as well". As South Africa (2011), stated that, the library of Parliament is a special library, which hope to accomplish the information needs and requirement of Members of the Parliament, Ministers and Parliamentary staff by providing unbiased relevant information and publications.

It is important to note that without the provision of information and its effective utilization in the legislative process by legislators, reliable laws that can remove the economy recession in the country cannot be achieved. In view of the above highlights this study used quantitative research methodology to identify the information need and services of legislators in North Central State of Nigeria in a recessed economy.

Statement of the problem

Libraries all over the world exist to provide information resources and services to satisfy users' information needs. This is what a special library such as legislative library is supposed to do in providing information resources and services to legislators in order to suppose their policy making.

However, the legislators' have not been able to formulate policies that will remove the country from its economic crunch. This scenario therefore prompts the researcher to ask some questions such as could it be insufficient of information resources to cater for the

information needs of legislators, or the services are not effective, or properly poor information literacy skills of the legislators or lack of access to the information resources? It is based on this backdrop that the researcher seeks to examine the information needs and services of legislators in legislative libraries in North Central State of Nigeria in a recessed economy.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine information needs and services of legislators in North Central State of Nigeria in a recessed economy.

The specific objective of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the information needs of legislators in State Houses of Assembly in North Central Nigeria.
2. To find out types of information services rendered to the legislators for effective policy making in legislative libraries.
3. To find out the challenges associated with legislators in meeting their information needs for effective policy making.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the types of information needs of legislators in State Houses of Assembly in North Central Nigeria?
2. What are the types of information services rendered to legislators for effective policy making in the legislative libraries?
3. What are the challenges associated with legislators in meeting their information needs for effective policy making?

Review of Literatures

The information need and information seeking behaviour theory was deduced from the work of Wilson's (2010) in which he examined the individual's information needs, or how information seeking behaviour related to other task-oriented behaviours. Wilson's first theory had its origins in a presentation at the University of Maryland in 1971 where "an attempt was made to map the processes involved in what was known at the time as "user need research".

Wilson's first theory was published in 1981; he outlined the factors leading to information seeking and the barriers inhibiting action. He stated that information-seeking was prompted by an individual's physiological, cognitive, or affective needs, which have the roots in personal factors, role demands, or environmental context. In order to satisfy these needs, an individual makes demands upon a system by acting as an intermediary or through the use of technology. The information provided by the system is then evaluated to determine if it satisfies the individual needs. The model was based on an understanding of human information seeking behaviour that are best understood as three interwoven frameworks: the user, the information system, and the Information needs is an individual or group desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a conscious need or unconscious need. Mohammed (2011) in a write up conceived that information as the bye-product of the conscious and unconscious actions and inactions that add to existing knowledge idea and experiences which lead to decision taken or to be taken. The write perceived information as anything that adds to individuals existing knowledge. Assessing the role of information in the legislative processes,

Pendit (2007) was of the view that with the growing hope and aspirations of the people, information becomes vital importance to members of parliament in effectively discharging their responsibilities.

Considering the characteristics of information in relation to its value to legislators, Hamalai (2009) acknowledge that information could be objective, timely and concise before being considered valuable to legislators. This is because adequate data and policy briefs are needed by legislators to effectively implement functions of laws-making. If legislators are well-informed, debates in chamber can be meaningful. Related to this, Arab (2008) asserts that information is an essential commodity for legislators as they require adequate resources and data to enable them participate effectively in the legislative business. Information has been considered as catalyst to the growth and development of any society (Brian, 2010).

Furthermore, Abubakar and Ibrahim (2010) commented on information needs of the legislators as follows: every legislator has a unique background, as representing an electorate so their need may be differed from each other, in time of collection some members may have multiple information needs than others. Consequently, legislators seem to have so many information needs, and these needs have to be fulfilled to enable the legislators actually perform their duties as people representatives from various constituencies, and as such those needs could not be the same. At the same time Iwhiwhu (2011) established that: lawmakers who are legislators need continuous information, must valid, relevant and cogent information should be provided to them so that they can make sound decision also sharpen and increase their initiative in process of law making.

Information service is a concept that various scholars and writers have defined and described interchangeably as: A service provided by, or for, a special library which draws attention to information possessed in the library or information department in anticipation of demand; this is done by preparing and circulating news sheets, literature surveys, reading lists, abstracts, particulars of articles in current periodicals etc.

Taking a look at this definition of information service in relation to legislators need for information is very vital, because by considering the nature of their work, lawmakers require such type of services to enable them get exact information based on their needs within a very short time. So also, the services emphasized providing information in anticipation which is of paramount importance to the legislators due to the nature of their duties. This tally with Umoru (2010) citing Blaise (2006) asserted that, "a librarian working in special library has to anticipate the needs of the readers and having the materials available before the question is asked. Ajibola (2007) confirmed this by stating that: The legislative library provides a variety of information services for law makers' use. Such services may be a specific request by a law maker; and, general information on topical issue. In addition, some information is prepared in anticipation on the work of the legislature because events in politics move fast, reflecting new developments and fresh shift in changing domestic and international situation

Akpom and Ifeanyi (2015) examined the electronic library support services for law students from five law faculties of law in Nigeria University. The study identified 24 electronic support services available in the law library. Majority of the respondents have full access to chatting and library support services were mostly acquitted through the assistance from the library and computing staff.

Alhassan and Saka (2008) conducted a survey research to determine the information needs and seeking behaviour of engineering lecturers in FUT Minna using a population of 125 Engineering lecturers out of which 40% was used for the study. Copies of questionnaire were administered on respondents and retrieved the completed from the respondents. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics. It was discovered that respondents used variety of information sources and that information on the job was the most sought information. Information is sought through interaction with colleagues.

Odu (2015) in a study on availability and utilization of government publication and sources of information for research in the study of Calabar, Nigeria adopt the use of theses/dissertation submitted between 2010 and 2014 alongside questionnaire, interview and direct observation. Result showed a total of 702 volumes of government publications in University of Calabar library. A total of 1453 references were cited in 40 theses/dissertation. From the 80 respondents, 55% do not use government publication.

Methodology

The study used descriptive survey design. The reason for choosing this design was because it could be used to study both large and small population and involves collecting data on a representative population on which generalization is made. The population for the study was one hundred and fifty-four (154) legislators. This comprises all the legislators in six (6) State Houses of Assembly in North Central Nigeria. These include: Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, and plateau State. The instrument for data collection was a structure questionnaire. Descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentages were used to analyse respondents data, while Means and standard deviation was used to analyse data in terms of answers provided from the research questions.

Data Analysis

One hundred and fifty-four (154) copies of the questionnaire were administered to legislators in six (6) State Houses of Assembly in North Central Nigeria. One hundred and thirty (135) copies were filled and returned, a response rate of 88% was obtained.

The breakdown of the response rate is shown in Table 1

Table 1: Response Rate

S/No	Names of States	No of Administered Questionnaire	No of Returned Questionnaire	Percentages (%) of Returned Questionnaire
1	Benue	30	27	18
2	Kogi	25	21	14
3	Kwara	24	22	14
4	Nasarawa	24	19	12
5	Niger	27	25	16
6	Plateau	24	21	14
	Total	154	135	88

Research Question 1: What are the types of Information needs of legislators in State Houses of Assembly in North Central Nigeria?

Table 2:

S/No	Information Needs of Legislator	SA	A	D	SD	N	FX	\bar{X}	StD
		78	56	1	0	135	482	3.57	1.07
1	The information needs of the legislators are mostly on legislative matters.	78	56	1	0	135	449	3.33	0.83
2	Legislators' information needs are usually on the constituency matters.	49	82	3	1	135	449	3.33	0.83
3	Political education and political awareness information are mostly the needs of the legislators.	64	58	6	7	135	430	3.19	0.69
4	The information needs of the legislators are mostly on the legal issue	51	65	12	7	135	479	3.55	1.05
5	The legislators' information needs are mostly on the government administrative matters.	74	61	0	0	135	486	3.60	1.10
6	Socio-economics issues are usually the information needs of the legislators.	81	54	0	0	135	492	3.64	1.14
7	Information needs of the legislators are mostly on amending of laws and the Constitution.	87	48	0	0	135	455	3.37	0.87
8	Electoral law is usually the information needs and goals of the legislators	65	62	1	7	135	455	3.37	0.87

Table 2, showed that the eight items listed have a high mean score greater than the bench mark mean of 2.50 of a 4-point scale. This means that they are information needs of legislators in the studies area.

Research Question 2: What are the types of information services rendered to legislators for effective policy making in the legislative libraries?

Table 3:

S/N	Types of Information Service	SA	A	D	SD	N	FX	\bar{X}	StD
1.	Reference services.	75	53	5	3	135	417	3.49	0.98
2.	Current Awareness Services.	42	57	12	24	135	387	2.69	0.19
3.	Selection Dissemination Services.	57	49	18	11	135	422	2.93	0.43
4.	Indexing and Abstracting Services.	58	65	10	2	135	449	3.12	0.62
5.	User Education Services'	68	52	7	8	135	450	3.13	0.63
6.	Internet Services.	76	53	2	4	135	471	3.27	0.77
7.	Archive Services.	65	52	8	10	135	442	3.27	0.77
8.	Lending Services.	85	36	7	7	135	469	3.47	0.97
9.	Bibliographic Services	57	40	21	17	135	407	3.01	0.52
10.	Record management services.	65	52	8	10	135	442	3.27	0.77
11.	Research services.	73	54	5	3	135	467	3.46	0.96
12.	Referral Services.	45	65	15	10	135	415	3.07	0.57

Table 3, revealed that all the twelve services listed have a mean score greater than the bench mark of 2.50 on a four-point scale.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges associated with legislators in meeting their information needs for effective policy making?

Table 4:

S/N	Challenges	SA	A	D	SD	N	FX	\bar{X}	StD
1.	Non-availability of current information resources.	22	15	41	57	135	272	2.01	0.49
2.	Poor human relationship of the library staff.	10	31	42	52	135	269	1.99	0.51
3.	Difficulty in finding relevant information resources	48	67	11	9	135	424	3.14	0.64
4.	Unconducive atmosphere of the library environment.	8	15	53	59	135	242	1.79	0.71
5.	Lack of technical assistance by library staff	66	58	6	5	135	455	3.37	0.87
6.	In convenient distance of the library building from the legislators' offices, committee rooms and the chamber.	81	43	7	4	135	471	3.49	0.99
7.	Lack of adequate funding for the library to provide effective services to the legislators.	18	23	57	37	135	292	2.16	0.34
8.	Inadequate ICT infrastructure.	24	17	36	58	135	277	2.05	0.45
9.	Lack of adequate knowledge and skills of search techniques to retrieve information.	21	17	33	64	135	265	1.96	0.54
10.	Irregular power supply	8	14	64	49	135	251	1.86	0.64
11.	Lack of awareness about the existence of certain information resources for legislative responsibilities.	70	41	14	10	135	441	3.27	0.77
Sectional Mean								2.46	0.04

Table 4, shows that four items have a mean score greater than 2.50 which is the benchmark mean. This means that the items with this mean score are challenges faced by the legislators. Item 3: Difficulty in finding relevant information resources ($X = 3.14$, StD = 0.64); item 5: Lack of technical assistance by library staff($X = 3.37$, StD = 0.87); item 6: In convenient distance of the library building from the legislators' offices, committee rooms and the chamber($X = 3.49$, StD = 0.99) and item 11: Lack of awareness about the existence of certain information resources for legislative responsibilities ($X = 3.27$, StD = 0.77). While items 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have a mean score below the 2.50 benchmark mean meaning they are not challenges affecting legislators in the use of information resources.

Discussion of Finding

The result of the analysis on the types of information needs of legislators in state houses of assembly in North Central Nigeria showed that their information needs during economic recession are on legislative matters, constituency matters, political education and political awareness, legal issues, government administrative matters, socio-economics issues, laws and the Constitution. These can be connected to their primary assignment which is representing the people of their constituency and legislating for them and also the power conferred on them by the constitution. This finding is similar to that of Iwhiwhu (2011) who

established that legislators' information need revolves round activities that will sharpen and increase their initiative in process of law making.

The study showed that reference services, current awareness services (CAS), selection dissemination of information (SDI), indexing and abstracting, user education, Internet services, archival services, lending services, bibliographic services, record management, research and referral services are the services rendered by the libraries in the state houses of assembly in North Central Nigeria to legislators. These services are rendered in the legislative libraries in order to be able to cater for the legislators' information need and services and to enable them make meaningful contribution on the floor of the House in order to effectively discharge their responsibilities. This is in agreement with the study Joel-Ikokoh and Enetta (2009) revealed that information services for legislators include the provision of current awareness service, selective dissemination of information (SDI), information dossiers etcetera. Considering the nature of legislators and their activities, the recognition of wide range of services to be rendered to them by the legislative libraries became necessary.

The study discovered challenges faced by the legislators in houses of assembly in North Central Nigeria in meeting their information needs for effective policy making are difficulty in finding relevant information resources, lack of technical assistance by library staff, in convenient distance of the library building from the legislators' offices, committee rooms and the chamber and lack of awareness about the existence of certain information resources for legislative responsibilities. This is contrary to the findings of Abubakar and Haruna (2010) in a survey of information needs and seeking behaviour of Katsina State House of Assembly Legislators, the following factors affecting the effective information needs and services are identified as listed by the librarian of the Katsina State House of Assembly are inadequate funding of the library, lack of modern information technology and obsolete library resources.

Conclusion /Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, it could be concluded that information needs of the legislators in state houses of assembly in North Central Nigeria in a recessed economy are mostly on legislatives matters, constituency matters, political education, legal issues, government administrative matters, socio-economics issues, laws and the Constitution. Reference services, current awareness services (CAS), selection dissemination of information (SDI), indexing and abstracting, user education, Internet services, archival services, lending services, bibliographic services, record management, research and referral services are the services rendered by the legislative libraries. The challenges faced by the legislators in state houses of assembly in North Central Nigeria in meeting their information needs for effective policy making in a recessed economy are difficulty in finding relevant information resources, lack of technical assistance by library staff, in convenient distance of the library building from the legislators' offices, committee rooms and the chamber and lack of awareness about the existence of certain information resources for legislative responsibilities.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

1. The legislative's library managements should endeavour to provide sufficient information retrieval devices to facilitate location of relevant information materials.
2. More funds should be made available to the legislative library so that more technical staff could be employed for smooth running of the library.

3. The legislative's library management should organise awareness programmes for the legislators to enable them know the information resources that are available in the library that will cater for their information need.

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