

The Effectiveness of Modern Information Retrieval Mechanism in Library Administration

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ABSTRACT

The utilisation of serials resources is an important source that provides latest information on research and current affairs. Using the Delta State University library Abraka, Nigeria as case study; the paper identified the various facilities that quicken the provision of information retrieval mechanism. It suggests the use of online data entry system to facilitate quick and easy information access in the Serials library.

Keywords: Library, Serials Materials, Organisation, ICT Facilities.

INTRODUCTION

Information is regarded as a major economic resource, which can be used by individuals, corporations and nations to political, social and economic advantage. Like other major resources, information offers the greatest possibilities to those who know how to use it. The daily growth of information according to Utor (1999) “brings about problems of location, acquisition, organization and dissemination and also brings about the problem of making it easily available to potential users, the right type of information at the right time”. The problems are made more frustrating as users themselves find it difficult to locate and make use of the right type of information they consider useful.

The Delta State University Library is central to the accomplishment of University goals since it directly aid teaching, learning, research and community service. To this end, the University Library acquires books, periodicals and other carriers of information in all the disciplines taught in the University. This is therefore aimed at assisting the library users to make maximum use of the information resources and services in the library. Information is essential to the smooth running of any organization. It cuts across all facets of administration, interactions, transactions, behaviours among others. Information is even more important to the individual. An organization or individual that is bereft of information is almost cut off from the world as a whole and could, in some cases, even be regarded to be as good as dead (Emojorho and Adomi, 2006)

According to Okiy (2008) the serials constitute an important part of the resources of an academic library because, they provide the latest information on research and current affairs. For this reason, it is necessary for the serials division to be as complete in its holdings as possible in order to support the teaching, learning, recreations and research programmes of the University. The serials collection is made up of both current and back-sets of periodicals for lecturers and students to access within the library but cannot be borrowed for home reading.

Ogbomo (2000) defines serials as “a publication issued in successive parts, usually at regular intervals and as a rule, intended to be continued indefinitely”. Serials include journals, magazines, bulletins and newsletters, proceedings learned societies and associations etc. they may be published daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly etc the search for information on any subject in an academic library must include the examination of serial publication because they

contain current information about new ideas or discoveries and keep researchers abreast of growth of knowledge in their areas of investigation.

In the selection and acquisition of materials, the serials librarian and collection development librarian work closely with the university librarian. However, the libraries welcome recommendations from patrons and faculty lecturers. Broadus (2001) asserts that Selection must be given due importance because funds are always limited, the available money should be spent wisely to meet the needs of users towards fulfilling the objectives of supporting, teaching, learning and research needs of the University. The serial Librarian should be able to satisfy the patrons by selecting and acquiring their immediate and anticipated needs.

Collection management involves managing the use of library collection, its storage, its organisation and making it accessible to users. The process of collection management has become very challenging and complex. As observed by Friend (2000), basic collection management activities include analysis of user needs, inter-and – intra-library communication, policy development, budgeting and allocation of resources, contract negotiations, macro-evaluations of collection, micro-evaluation for selection, relegation, preservation or withdrawal of stock and system evaluation

In view of the rapidly increasing cost of acquiring documentary library items including journals, the Delta State University library that subscribes to 768 journal titles have cut down her subscriptions to only 112 titles. Periodicals otherwise known as serials are current publications issued in successive parts and to be continued indefinitely. The organisation of these serials therefore is an essential preliminary to effective exploitation and dissemination of information, but it is sad to note that many library patrons who are in dire need of these current materials leave the library without being able to locate these vital information because they have no knowledge of how serials materials are being organised in the Delta State University Library. It is against this background that this research investigated the organisation and retrieval of information in serials library at the Delta State University, Abraka.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The paper is case study based on the internal organisation of Delta State University library thus, dependently solely on the organization of serials collections.

DISCUSSIONS

After the necessary selection, routine of ordering, purchasing, receiving and invoice clearing the periodicals are forwarded to the organization unit for processing. The library is responsible for: (a) Stamping and stapling of the newspapers, journals and magazines; (b)

Identifying the newspaper, magazines and journals by serials division; (c) Cataloguing and classifying the journals using library of congress subject headings and classification scheme; (d) Recording journals into the kardex while newspapers and magazines are entered into record books. The kardex has its trays of cards on which the bibliographic information of materials are recorded. The bibliographic information includes title of journal, publishers, frequency, volume, year etc.

The magazines and newspapers in the serials section are properly indexed. Indexing of these materials in this regard entails recording relevant bibliographic information concerning the newspapers and magazines. This information is entered into 3" x 5" cards normally arranged in alphabetical order according to subjects. The bibliographic information includes the titles, the publishers, and the volume, date of publication, month, invoice number, amount and date paid. Emojorho (2009) libraries hold a wide range of information bearing materials. The library materials are made of books and non-book materials. With the astronomical growth of

information, the pressure is now on the librarians or information scientists to organize the materials in a manner that will be convenient for users to retrieve required items easily and effectively. It is not enough to acquire, it is far more important to get the materials to the desk of the users.

Libraries, whose role involve the location, selections, acquisitions; organization and dissemination of information are still using 19th Century methods. The organization of periodicals involves indexing, bibliographic descriptions in the catalogue cabinets, kardex and the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The journals are properly recorded into kardex, thereafter; they are properly catalogued and classified using Library of Congress classification scheme in assigning notations to materials.

In view of this organization of the serials materials, journals are logically arranged according to class marks while the kardex alerts the users on the varieties of journals in the various disciplines. The newspapers are kept in the shelves according to their year and month of publication, that is to say, that material published in 2009 are kept together in a separate place with the index indicating the varieties of information in the magazines and journals. In the process of retrieving these serial materials, the serials public staffs are fully aware of the serials arrangement, guide users to borrow them according to rules and regulations.

At the public service unit, the clientele make their information request while the staffs help them to search the kardex and catalogue cabinets. Having identified their specific needs, the public service staffs quickly retrieves the materials to the user who borrows them for use within the serials section by presenting identity card and registers them for use. Users name are entered into the borrowers notebook to receive materials and they sign out when material is returned. The newspapers and magazines that formed considerable bulk of serial material are well indexed and their cards arranged in alphabetical order in the catalogue cabinets. To this end, users are able to locate needed information from the serial catalogue and kardex tools.

Current issues of serials are arranged or displayed on racks or shelves. When new issues arrive, the back issues are properly stored in the appropriate boxes or shelves according to their subjects and notations.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are computer based tools used by librarians in acquiring, processing, storing and disseminating information. In order to boost the effective organization and information dissemination, the university library went into automation in 2002 and SNIPPET computers was commissioned to computerize the library by supplying 23 computers, a server, backup server and networking of the various section of the library at the cost of ₦6,357,400.00. In August, 2003 Urhobo Progress Union, Canada Branch donated the sum of ₦650,000.00 through which an X-lib library software was acquired. Following its limitation SLAM (Strategic Library Automation Management) software was acquired to replace X-lib in 2007.

The systems division handles all issues concerning ICT operations and services. To this end, systems unit therefore oversees all data entries including the retrospective conversion of catalogue records in the serials section and the library in general. Presently the data entry is still in progress and when completed the online public access catalogue will allow users to search serial collections and her library holdings. To further boost information retrieval in the serials division of the library, one hundred computers hooked to V-Sat were properly installed in the month of March 2011. The SLAM library software is based on oracle technology. It is menu-driven that consists; file, patron, catalogue, circulation, administration, report windows menu. Considerable academic libraries are now using SLAM software, these libraries include, John Haris library, Benin City, Benson Idahosa University, and Adekunle Ajasin University Library, Akungba.

At the serials section, materials are entered online according to the serials software menu. It is optimistic that when exercise is fully accomplished, library users will now access

the serials collections through Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) instead of the traditional manual catalogue cards. According to Emojorho (2009), The OPAC allows any member of the library's public to search the catalogue database in order to see if the library holds a particular material, its location and quick provision of data. The user must learn how to use author or title menu if only he/she knows the author or title of book or a particular journal title, the subject field or what he wishes to consult. To this end, the user must enter subject heading and the system will show the varieties of materials in that subject and where to locate them easily.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Serial materials are indispensable feature of the library information and research values. Most new discoveries and novel ideas first appear in periodicals. Therefore, the organization and retrieval of serials information are held with all seriousness because the flood of serials collections that are not organized can lead to obscurity and confusion instead of clarifying and informing. The full value of any library collections can only be appreciated by an understanding of the organization of its materials. To this end, orientations are being given to patrons periodically on the organization of serials collections so as to facilitate information retrieval.

Furthermore, it is pertinent to recommend for the use of adequate serials funding, to aid the acquisition of periodicals and ICT facilities to enhance global information sharing using internet connectivity. The library management should expedite action on the online data entry because when it is fully accomplished it will facilitate quick and easy information access in the Serials library. Seminars and workshops should be regularly organised for both the library staff and the users on serials arrangement as well as the ongoing ICT application to serials and information retrieval.

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