SURVEY OF PERSONNEL AND OPERATIONS IN LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY FROM RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA

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The results of a survey conducted to investigate the involvement of professional librarians in material procurement, discharge of library duties and the level of involvement of non librarians (at management level) in the running of the special libraries are presented.

INTRODUCTION

The grade of library personnel discharging the duties of librarians in an establishment varies according to the purpose of the library, the number of prospective users and the size of collection in the library.

Depending on how the library fulfills the need, and also the number of people who influence the existence of such libraries, a number of difficulties are experienced by these libraries. Bailey [1] stated that there were several factors which may be used to determine the level of management, a person occupies in an organisation. These factors include, the number of employees in the department, the size of the departmental budget or the functional responsibility of the departmental head. In some cases, the head of the library may not belong to the level of management staff. While some libraries enjoy as much support from the management, others are seen as mere book stores. The staff of such establishment are usually underrated and their performances fall below expectation.

In some establishments, the librarians often do not have the opportunity to discharge their duties in purely professional manner due to the lack of support from the top management. The success or failure of libraries depend on the co-operation they receive from the management. Moreover, some libraries need a lot of awareness campaign program especially where they had existed for some time simply as book stores before a decision was taken to convert them to libraries. When such a change over has taken place, it is the duty of the first librarian to create an image that will put the library on a solid footing. It is the efforts of the librarian that will direct the management’s attention towards the new needs of the library. Speaking on professional image, Haliaday [2] maintained that professional respect could be inherited from past library staff. Librarians who struggled to leave legacies wherever they work succeed in establishing good functional libraries.

The present study was conducted to investigate the level of professional duties performed, their ability to meet the specific information need as well as their performance as librarians based on a survey of library personnel and their operations in seven libraries in ministries and industries in Rivers State of Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

Structured questionnaire (Annexure) was designed to collect information from the following seven libraries located in industries to serve the specific information need of the staff of the establishment.

Law libraries (2): (a) Central Law Library, High Court, Port Harcourt
(b) Ministry of Justice Library, Port Harcourt
Research libraries (2): (a) African Regional Aquaculture library, Aluu.
(b) Rivers State Institute of Agricultural Research and Training library, Onne (R.I.A.T).
Oil industry libraries (3) (a) Nigerian Agrip Oil Company library (b) Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation library (N.N.P.C.) (c) National Petroleum Refining Company library (N.P.R.C.)

The areas surveyed include i) the influence of the parent organisation, ii) resource development, iii) analysis of the duties performed, and iv) nature of the relationship between the users and the librarians.

The questionnaire was designed after a careful survey of their activities and they were administered in person and attended to by the head of each library. All questionnaires collected were used for the following analysis.

RESULTS AND OBSERVATIONS

On the management of these libraries, it was discovered that while five of them do not have problem in co-ordinating the work of all the staff as a result of their different educational background, one library had problem and one was neutral. Most of the people working in these libraries who are not librarians engage themselves in part-time studies to qualify as professional librarians.

In two of these libraries, the head librarians are not involved in setting the goal of the establishment and take directive from the head of the establishment. Further, these libraries have no written policy on lending of books to users and if there was such a written policy, not all staff are aware of its existence. Lending of books in all these libraries is restricted to registered members from the establishment. Three of the libraries have special concessions extended to unregistered users looking for research materials especially in-house publications. The registration cards are not transferable and all libraries frown at registered users borrowing books on behalf of unregistered ones.

In these libraries surveyed, men outnumber women on a ratio of 6:1. While Celli [3] commented on the exclusion of women in the work-force in Saudi Arabia, Harris et al [4] reported that women outnumbered men in librarianship by a ratio of approximately 4:1 in Canada. On evaluation of female staff, it was noted that every one (male or female) preferred to work with male staff. In one library, it was reported that the female staff dodged shift duties and sought transfer to other stations. Women, because of their peculiar problems generally contribute less than men in their output. The better life programme of the federal government of Nigeria designed to encourage improvement of output of women, has offered fresh opportunities for women development in Nigeria.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

The Central Law library, the oldest one, has the largest number of books and journals. The African Regional Aquaculture library has the least and just 7 years old. To rank these libraries on collection and age of libraries, Spearman's coefficient of rank correlation was used. The result showed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Libraries</th>
<th>No. of volumes</th>
<th>Rank of no. of volumes</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Rank of age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African Regional Aquaculture Library</td>
<td>1690</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.A.O.C. Library</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.I.A.T. Library</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.N.P.C. Library</td>
<td>8000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.P.R.C. Library</td>
<td>10000</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Justice Library</td>
<td>25000</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Law Library</td>
<td>94000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
direct correlation between the volumes of books and journals and the age of the libraries to have a correlation of 0.9. In all these libraries, there is good correlation between the number of volumes held and the age of the libraries and a steady growth in stock development. Harrison [5] pointed out that total stock might depend on little more than the poverty of the book fund over many years. No matter how small book fund may be, addition of new materials to the stock should not be neglected.

There is no clear inter-library co-operation exists between these libraries. Some have exchanged materials informally and have neither maintained holdings of core collection nor union list of holdings of other libraries. It is supposed that these libraries should share their resources and at least maintain a common list of holdings especially the ones related in nature of their services. Puja [6] remarked the need for initiation of this essential service. Moreover, information sharing brings the need for standardizations with all its added advantages [7].

Judging from the economic state of the establishment surveyed, all the librarians think that each library does not receive an equitable share of the fund when compared with other departments in the same establishment. Miller [8] advised that economic constraints will continue to press libraries to economise, standardize procedures, reduce staffing and make more efficient use of existing facilities, money and personnel. Most libraries are starved out of existence due to lack of fund especially, as in one case, where the head librarian does not even have control over the library funds.

**ANALYSIS OF DUTIES**

The acquisition librarian is charged with the responsibility of procuring books for the library. In the Central Law Library, the librarian and the commissioner for justice acquire books for the library. At the African Regional Aquaculture library, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) does the acquisition. In other libraries, the head of establishment or supplies officer buys the materials with the help of the librarian. The circulation routine and the audio-visual materials are mostly handled by the para-professional staff.

On resource processing, the respondents were asked to state the classification scheme they use. While Regional Aquaculture library uses the Universal Decimal Classification scheme, the May’s scheme is ideal for law libraries and legal literature. Rivers State Institute of Agricultural Research and Training (R.I.A.T.) library which is a branch of a university library uses the Library of Congress scheme. The three oil companies based at Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (N.N.P.C.), National Petroleum Refining Company (N.P.R.C.) and Nigerian Agrip Oil Company have in-house schemes which is peculiar to them. Libraries select schemes that take adequate care of the nature of materials they stock.

**LIBRARY STAFF AND SERVICE TO USERS**

As regards services, users and the library staff disagree on how much assistance the respective library staff will provide to users [9]. Librarians were asked to rate the services they offer to users on a scale of 1 to 6. 1 being the most important and 6 the least important. Table 2 shows the ranks given to each service. The row shows ranking while the column shows the number of libraries that gave each rank. The result shows that book provision is ranked the most important while service to users come second in importance. Shelf reading and catalogue maintenance are ranked the least. Users made requests which were either answered readily or needed specific search, as well as general inquires that needed directional replies.
Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Number per rank</th>
<th>Rank position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book provision</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to users</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing of acquired books</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compilation of reading list &amp; literature searches</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reader's advisory services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelf reading &amp; catalogue maintenance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some users have been helpful to the library by talking good of the library at management meetings to attract funds to the library. They even donate books and other materials to library and seek support for the library to secure their needs. The library’s contribution towards the progress of the establishment centres on being custodian of the publications released by the establishment. Christianson and Ahrensofold [10] forecasted decline in special library activities because the establishments may not have a realistic understanding of how such a library should function or the resources that must be committed to it. The role played by individual libraries is different from one establishment to the other.

In some establishments, staff were transferred from one section or department to the library. The investigation on staff recruitment shows that the two law libraries engage their staff by open advertisement only. The rest employ other methods such as, recommendation by other librarians, transfer from other departments or the establishment as well as interview of staff who applied from existing libraries. Most of the libraries have only one or two professional librarians. One library has degree holder in a subject serving as the librarian. Para-professional librarians are just one in some of the libraries. Staff with secondary school certificate as well as first school leaving certificate out number other grades of staff in every library. This cadre of staff serves as typists, security staff, cleaners and messengers.

The buildings occupied by these libraries were not purpose oriented. Some were offices which have been so converted. The result of this investigation shows that five of the libraries have plans for expansion under the present set up. They however, have no plans for a separate building to house the library.

**CONCLUSION**

This investigation has shown the inherent problems experienced by libraries. It is expected that older libraries acquire more books than younger ones. The rate of collection growth depends more on the rate at which book fund is made judicious use of. The experience in these libraries shows that not all the people at the helm of affairs in library acquisition have total control of the book fund. Gifts and exchange are good sources of enlarging one’s collection.

Library buildings no matter how big they are, one day, they will be inadequate. All these libraries are located in places they do not have adequate space to operate. All these libraries lack enough professional librarians. Hence, the library users do not receive the necessary attention they require. Establishments that wish to open libraries, need to realise that investment made in this area help to improve the quality of service the library will render.
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ANNEXURE

SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Address of Library

Volumes of Books hold ____________________________ Journals ____________________________

Age of the Library ____________________________

1. Are there problems in co-ordinating the work of all the staff as a result of their different educational background? Yes/No.

2. Is the Head Librarian involved in setting the goals and objectives of the establishment? Yes/No.

3. How do you evaluate your female staff?
   a) They represent the library better than men Yes/No.
   b) They are more helpful than men Yes/No.
   c) No problem at all Yes/No.
   d) They dodge shift duties and transfer to other branches Yes/No.
   e) They are not cheerful at work Yes/No.

4. Tick Yes or No.
   a) The library has a written policy on lending of books Yes/No.
   b) The library lends books to all members of the establishment Yes/No.
   c) Lending is open to the public Yes/No.
   d) Lending is only to members to the establishment Yes/No.
   e) There are special concessions extended to unauthorized users Yes/No.
   f) The library frowns at staff borrowing books on behalf of unauthorized users Yes/No.

5. Please tick as appropriate:
   a) The present library building is specifically built to serve as a library Yes/No.
   b) There is a plan to expand the library Yes/No.

6. The sources of staff recruitment in your library are:
   a) Interview from existing libraries Yes/No.
   b) Recommendations by other librarians.
   c) Open advertisement only.
   d) Transfer from other departments of the establishment.
   e) Others (please, specify)

7. Fill in the number of these grades of staff in your library:-
   a) Professional librarians with graduate degree in library science ____________________________
   b) Masters degree in library science or information science together with the appropriate collegiate subject training ____________________________
   c) Diploma in Library Science ____________________________
   d) West African School Certificate ____________________________
   e) First School Leaving Certificate ____________________________

8. What is the designation of the staff that do these jobs? (If the post does not exist mark X).
   a) Book provision (Buying of books) ____________________________
   b) Reference service ____________________________
   c) Classifying of books ____________________________
   d) Cataloguing of books ____________________________
   e) Book selection ____________________________
   f) Circulation Routine ____________________________
   g) Takes care of the archives ____________________________
   h) Head of the library ____________________________
   i) Head the audio-visual ____________________________

contd.
9. Cataloguing of books in your library is done by:
   a) Professional librarian
   b) Non-professional librarian
   c) Others (please, specify)

10. Rank these functions on a scale of 1 to 6. 1 being the most important and 6 the least important.
   a) Book provision
   b) Service to users
   c) Processing of acquired books
   d) Compilation of reading list and literature searches
   e) Readers advisory service
   f) Shelf reading and cataloguing maintenance

11. What system of classification do you use:
   a) Dewey Decimal
   b) Library of Congress
   c) Colon Classification
   d) Bliss Classification
   e) In-house system
   f) Elizabeth Moy's
   g) Others (please, specify)

12. What type of requests do library users make?
   a) Reference inquiries that are readily answered
   b) Specific search requests
   c) General inquiries that often need directional replies
   d) Others (please, specify)

13. What type of co-operation exists between your library and other libraries as regards information exchange.
   a) Maintenance of core collection mutually agreed upon
   b) Maintenance of a union list of holdings of co-operating libraries
   c) Others (please, specify)

14. What alternative information sources do the users consult
   a) Personal collection of other users
   b) Book agents and vendors
   c) Others (please, specify)

15. Some of the users are helpful to the library in the following ways:
   a) Talking good of the library at council meeting
   b) Donating books to the library
   c) Seeking for support for the library to secure its needs
   d) Others (please, specify)

16. Judging from the economic state of your establishment, do you think the library receives an equitable share of fund when compared to other departments.