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

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The involvements of professional librarians in material procurement, discharge of library duties and the level of involvement of non librarians in the running of the special libraries in the Rivers State of Nigeria as revealed through a survey are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

The grades of library personnel in an establishment vary according to the purpose of the library, the number of prospective users and the size of its collection.

Libraries of different grades have been established to serve the immediate needs of users. A number of difficulties are experienced by these libraries due to various factors. Bailey [1] stated that there were several factors which may be used to determine the level of management that a person occupies in an organisation. These factors include the number of employees, the size of the budget or the functional responsibility of the department head. In some cases, the head of the library may not belong to the management level staff. While some libraries enjoy as much support as possible from the management, others are seen as mere bookstores. The staff of the later category are usually under-rated and their performances fall below expectation. Even they do not have the opportunity to discharge their duties in purely professional manner due to the influence of the top management. The success or failure of these libraries depend on the co-operation they receive from the management. When such a change over takes place from a house to library, it is the duty of the librarian to create an image awareness campaign that will put the library on a sound footing. This effort of the librarian will direct the management's attention towards the new needs of the library. Speaking on professional image, Holladay [2] confirmed that professional respect could not be inherited from past library staff. Librarians who struggled to leave legacies past succeed in establishing good functional libraries.

This study on library personnel and operations in public library as well as libraries in ministries and industries in Rivers State of Nigeria was conducted to investigate the level of professional duties performed and the influence of sex on the library profession.

METHODOLOGY

Questionnaire method was used to collect information on the age of the libraries, staff qualification and disposition, and the influence of top management and users on the functions of the library in which following nine libraries were investigated.

One public library - Rivers State Library, Port Harcourt.

One theological library - Calvary College of Theology, Rukpokwu.

Two law libraries - (1) Central Law Library, High Court, Port Harcourt.
                (2) Ministry of Justice Library, Port Harcourt.

Two research libraries - (1) African regional Aquaculture Library, Aluu.
RIVERS STATE INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING LIBRARY, ONNE (R.I.A.T.).

Three oil industry - Libraries

(1) Nigerian Agip Oil Company Library.

(2) Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Library, Port Harcourt (M.N.P.C.).

RESULT AND OBSERVATION

It was observed that the Central Law Library has the largest volume of books and journals but ranked second in age (Table 1). The African Regional Aquaculture Library has the least collection just 5 years old. The Spearman's co-efficient to find the direct correlation between the volumes of books and journals and the age of the libraries has a correlation of 0.9. This shows that there is good correlation between the number of volumes held and the age of the libraries. It also portrays a steady growth in stock development. Harrison [3] pointed out that total stock might depend on little more than the poverty of book fund over many years. No matter how small book fund may be, additions of new materials to the stock is made yearly.

Except the Rivers State Library, other libraries were not having purpose built buildings. Some were offices which have been so converted. The result of this investigation shows that five of the libraries have plans for expansion within the present set up but have no plans for a separate library building.

Table 1

Number of volumes and ages of the libraries 1991-92.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of 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>662</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.A.O.C. Library</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R.I.A.R.T. Library</td>
<td>2034</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.N.P.C. Library</td>
<td>5000</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvary College of Theology Library</td>
<td>6098</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.P.R.C. Library</td>
<td>7000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Justice Library</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivers State Library Board</td>
<td>70,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Law Library</td>
<td>91,000</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The methods of recruiting staff showed that only the Rivers State Library engaged its staff by open advertisement. The rest employed other methods such as, recommendation by other librarians, transfer from other departments or the establishment as well as interview from existing libraries. Most of the libraries have only one or two librarians with professional qualification. 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 school certificate as well as first school leaving certificate out number other grades of staff in every library. This cadre serve as typist, security staff, cleaners and messengers. While five libraries did not have problem in coordinating the work of the staff as a result of their different educational background, one had problem and three were neutral. A good number of the non-qualified staff engage themselves in part-time studies to quality as professional librarians. In two of the libraries, the head librarian is not involved in setting the goal of the establishment but merely take directive from the head of the establishment.

While Celli [4] commented on the exclusion of women in the work-force in Saudi Arabia, Harris et al [5] reported that women out numbers men in librarianship by a ratio of approximately four to one in Canada. In these libraries surveyed however, men out number women by a ratio of six to one. On evaluation of female staff, it was noted that every librarian (male or female) preferred to work with male staff. In one library it was reported that the female staff dodged shift duties and transfer to other branches of the library.

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

As regards service, users and the library staff disagree about extent of assistance of the respective library staff to users [6]. 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. The result (Table 2) shows that book provision is ranked the most important while service to users come second in importance. Shelf reading and catalogue maintenance is ranked the least.

On resources processing, the respondents were asked to state the type of cataloguing scheme usage. While Regional Aquaculture Library uses the Universal Decimal Classification Scheme, the two law libraries use the Elizabeth Moy's Classification Scheme which is ideal for law libraries and legal literature. The Rivers State uses the Dewey Decimal Classification while R.I.A.T. library which is a branch of a University library uses the Library of Congress Scheme. N.N.P.C. and the N.A.O.C.

Professional libraries handle cataloguing of books in the libraries. In those libraries without professionals, the in-house type of arrangement is common.

Most of the libraries have no written lending policy. Where there is such a written policy, all staff are aware of its existence. Only the state library lends books to the public who have registered with them. Four of the libraries have special concessions extended to unregistered library users. All libraries frown at staff or registered users borrowing books on behalf of unregistered users.

There is no clear inter-library co-operation existing between these libraries. Some exchange materials informally and have neither maintained holdings of core collection nor union list of holdings. It is proposed that these libraries should share their resources and at least maintain a common list of holdings especially the ones similar in nature like the law libraries. Puja [7] remarked the need for initiation of this essential service. Moreover, information sharing brings in the wake the need for standardisations with all its added advantages.
SURVEY OF LIBRARY PERSONNEL AND OPERATIONS IN SELECTED LIBRARIES

Table 2

Ranking of library functions. (Each row represents the number per rank)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book provision</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service to users</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processing of acquired books</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compilation of reading list and literature searches</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readers advisory services</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelf reading and catalogue maintenance</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Judging from the economic state of the establishments surveyed, all the librarians think that the library does not receive an equitable share of the fund when compared with other departments in the same establishments. Miller [9] advised librarians that economic constraints would continue to press libraries to economise, standardise procedures, reduce staffing and make more efficient use of existing facilities, fund and personnel. Most of these small libraries are starved out due to lack of fund especially, as in one case, where the head librarian does not even have control over the library funds.

Finally, 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 its requirements. The library’s contribution towards the progress of the establishment centres as custodian of the publications released by the establishment. Christianson and Ahrensfold [10] forecasted decline in special library activities because the establishment’s lack of realistic understanding of how such a library should function or the resources that must be committed to it. The role played by individual libraries differed from one establishment to the other.

From the above results, it is clear that some of these libraries have accumulated materials over the ages. Professional librarians are few in the libraries and the library schools should be encouraged to train more librarians especially the para-professionals. Processing of materials and service to users need to be given priority when discussing service to users.

Lastly, attention has been drawn to co-operation between libraries in collection development as no library can have enough stock for its user. In fact, the result of this investigation will save the way of thinking of this type of co-operation.

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