Describes the importance of the libraries and information centres in decision making by the administrators and managers. Reports a survey which was conducted to study the use of libraries and information centres by the administrators and decision makers of the IMO state in Nigeria. Suggestions are also made to establish the libraries in various government departments, make an assessment of the requirements of the decision makers and acquire relevant information sources in the library.

INTRODUCTION

Local governments are created to bring development to the grassroot. Therefore, the planners and administrators of local government are involved in various policy and decision making processes which are intended to bring about the development of the local areas and communities of the country. Development whether at national, state or local government level, is a process of generating resources and more efficiently allocating them for achieving greater socially-satisfying ends [1]. The generation and allocation of resources must be based on valid facts and data which are to be provided and made accessible to those involved in developmental planning and decision making processes.

For the planners and decision makers of local government in Imo state in particular and Nigeria in general, it is essential to make adequate use of relevant information to arrive at valid and rational decisions. The sources of such information have to be made accessible to them. The quality of any planner’s decision depends on the quality of information upon which such decisions are based. The quality of information, in this context, means relevance, accuracy, up-to-date ness, reliability and timely ness.

Information is a critical ingredient in decision-making. It is knowledge communicated by others or obtained by personal study, investigation, intelligence, derived from reading, observation or instructions in any society [3]. Precisely, information is regarded as data to be used in decision-making [2]. It can be said that the information is an essential tool for the planners and decision makers and the libraries and information centres are the stores and gate keepers of information. They help the decision-making by supplying the required information. Libraries and information centres collect, process, organize, store, and preserve information and retrieve and disseminate it to the policy and decision makers whenever they need. By doing so, the libraries have become veritable tools of information for the planners and administrators. The role of a library becomes more significant when it gathers, processes, stores and diffuses information on economic, political, social, educational, scientific, technical, cultural and aesthetic affairs.

OBJECTIVES

The decision-makers of the local government take a lot of decisions relating to the development in the state. These decisions depend on the information available in the libraries and information centres. In Imo state, a number of libraries exist which provide a wide range of information services to fulfill the information needs of local government planners and decision makers. However, it is not yet known whether the services of the existing libraries are properly utilised by them or not. Therefore, a study was undertaken to determine the role played by the libraries in providing
USE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

information service to their users. The study had following specific objectives:

a) To identify the informaion needs of local government policy and decision makers in Imo state,

b) To ascertain the sources of informaion used by them,

c) To determine the extent to which the available library and information services satisfy their information needs,

d) To identify the factors that influence the use or non-use of available library and information resources in decision making, and

e) To improve the use of information services by local government decision makers in the state.

METHODODOLOGY

Survey method was used for collecting the data for the study. The subject consisted of 300 top officials and functionaries of local governments drawn from thirty local government areas of the Imo state. Since the study was basically concerned with information utilization in decision-making, the respondents were randomly chosen from the senior staff cadre in the local government administration in the state. Data was collected by using a questionnaire developed by the researcher.

Following information was collected with the help of the questionnaire.

- Name of the user and the local government area,
- Sex of the user,
- Status,
- Information requirements,
- Information sources used, and
- Information utilization.

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents with the help of the final year library Science students of Imo State University.

The reliability of the information gathered by the questions was tested by the researcher's colleagues on a sample of ten top officials of Obowu Local Government Area, and its adequacy was established. In addition to the questionnaire, the researcher conducted oral interviews with a representative sample of the respondents in order to cross-check the information. This also helped in ascertaining more facts.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The data collected from the respondents through the questionnaire was analyzed. Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 280 were returned and were found usable. This represented response rate of 93%.

With regard to the information needs of the respondents, all the respondents reported that they required information in development planning and decision making. The respondents indicated that their information needs were centred on job/ career, educational, economic, social, political, cultural recreational, aesthetic, and current affairs. All of them were of the opinion that they require information for decision making.

On the question of the respondents' awareness of their information needs, all of them expressed the awareness of their information requirements. However, they indicated different strategies or approaches used by them in satisfying their information needs. (Table 1)

It is surprising that only 40 (14.3%) respondents out of 280 indicated the use of libraries in solving their information problems. Maximum number of respondents depend on official records to satisfy their information needs. The respondents were also asked to indicate the type of materials they used in gathering information. 67 (23.9%) respondents reported to have used books, 57 (20.3%) depended on official records, 48 (17.2%) used newspapers while 37 (13.2%) got their information from oral sources. Journals, magazines and advertisements were also used by 27 (9.6%), 23 (8.3%) and 21 (7.5%) respectively.
Table 1
Information Sources Used by Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Sources</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Official records</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Colleagues</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>18.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Radio/Television</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Newspapers</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Libraries</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Personal book collection</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 280 100.0

The respondents who indicated the use of libraries as information sources were requested to express their opinion on the extent the libraries satisfied their information needs. The information needs of 70% of them were satisfied by the available library resources. The reasons given by the respondents for not getting satisfied by the libraries included:

- Lack of up-to-date information,
- Non-availability of the books they required,
- Lack of relevant and related information materials, and
- Lack of cooperation by the library staff.

On the issue of the type of libraries they used in satisfying their information needs, 18(45%) out of the 40 respondents who used libraries reported that they used public libraries. This was followed by 7(17.5%) who used university libraries, 6(15%) of them used college libraries, 4(10%) consulted special libraries, 3(7.5%) used school libraries, while 2(5%) used national library.

The high percentage of the respondents using public libraries, perhaps, is an indication of the respondents' awareness of the importance of public library services in the provision of information development matters.

The respondents were also asked if they encountered difficulties in using libraries. 18(45%) respondents expressed their difficulty in determining the type of library to approach for their information needs, 12(30%) of them expressed their difficulty in ascertaining the information materials to be consulted while 10(25%) respondents experienced difficulties in locating and retrieving information materials in libraries.

The frequency of library use by respondents is given in Table 2.

Table 2
Frequency of Library Use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a fortnight</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>32.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 40 100
The respondents were requested to indicate the reasons for using the libraries. 14(35%) respondents used libraries because of the quick and ready services provided by them, 12(30%) of them used libraries because they (libraries) provided varied information materials, 10(25%) consulted libraries because of the availability of free service in the libraries while 4(10%) used libraries and information services because of the cooperative attitude of the library staff.

The following reasons for non-use of library and information services were given by the respondents:

a) Lack of awareness of the usefulness of libraries as information sources;
b) Distant location of libraries;
c) Non-availability of libraries in local government departments;
d) Lack of transportation and communication facilities to maintain links with libraries;
e) Lack of an instruction manual for using library; and
f) Lack of finance for maintaining library.

All the respondents expressed the desire of having libraries in local government departments which shows that the provision of libraries will go a long way in satisfying the information needs of administrators and managers in decision making.

The respondents were also requested to give suggestions for better use of library services. All the respondents agreed that the establishment of libraries at local government headquarters would satisfy their information needs to a great extent. 80(28.6%) indicated that the availability of a nearby public library would also give them additional facility to acquire information. 75(26.8%) required an instruction manual to use the library, 50(17.8%) were of the opinion that the provision of mobile library services would help them to access the library material while 40(14.3%) needed direct communication link with the libraries. 35(12.5%) respondents indicated that adequate publicity and advertisement of the library services would improve their use by the administrators and managers in planning and decision making.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study have far-reaching implications for the provision and use of information by local government decision-makers. Another survey had also shown that the local government decision makers in the state have a universe of unsatisfied information needs [4]. The implication of this is that they need a wide range of reliable information services to satisfy their needs. Their access to required information will enhance their capabilities of decision-making as well as the quality of their decisions. This calls for an adequate provision of libraries providing information to the policy and decision makers of the local government.

The investigation has also shown that some of the respondents were not aware of the importance of libraries as information centres. This may be attributed to lack of adequate publicity and advertisement on the part of libraries in the provision of information. To create consciousness of the crucial role of libraries in the provision of information, the library managers in the state should publicize their services so that the local government decision makers and the general public become aware of the availability of library and information services in the state. As can be seen from results of the study, the respondents consulted different types of materials in gathering information. This implies that the library and information managers should provide the local government planners and decision makers with the information in required formats and packages.

The study revealed that the available library and information services did not satisfy the information needs of the respondents. This is where the managers of the libraries particularly those of the public libraries need to pay greater attention. The managers and information experts should try to identify the information needs of planners of the local government and take necessary steps to fulfill them.

It is also noted from the study that the respondents used different types of libraries in order to satisfy their information needs. The higher percentage of the respondents using public
libraries is indicative of the multi-purpose nature of public libraries and also the adequacy of services with which they cater to the information needs of the respondents. It is also suggested that the local government decision makers should diversify their use of libraries, that is, they should extend their information gathering to other libraries in the state also.

The provision of an instruction manual for the library user is suggested to solve the problem of the respondents in information gathering. The reasons adduced by the respondents for their non-use of the library and information services have serious implications. Efforts should be made by the state government to establish more public and rural libraries in the state to make an effective utilization of information resources. Local governments in the state should also set up libraries in each local government headquarters. Such libraries will provide adequate and relevant information to local government decision-makers. In conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

a) The state government should establish more divisional, branch, rural and public libraries.

b) A library should be established in each local government headquarter.

c) The Imo state library board should extend its mobile library and information services to local government administrators and decision makers.

d) Public library managers in the state should extend their current awareness service to the local government administrators.

e) The decision makers and planners of local government should use all types of libraries to satisfy their information needs.

f) User studies may be carried out from time to time with a view to determining the needs of users, and providing better services to them. This will help the managers of the libraries to tailor their services according to the needs of the users especially the decision and policy makers of local government.

REFERENCES


