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Adequacy of Legal Information Resources and Services of Law Libraries in Selected Nigerian Universities

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Abstract

This study seeks to determine the adequacy of legal information resources and services of law libraries in selected Nigerian universities. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The total of 252 postgraduate law students of 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 sets in the two federal universities in South-East formed the population. The entire population was used as the sample. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire and observation check-list. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and percentages. Arithmetic mean was used to analyse data obtained from the research questions with scale value of 50%. The findings of the study revealed among others that the findings showed that legal information resources are available in the federal university law libraries in South-East, Nigeria, although more innovative services need to be established to be completely commensurate with the demands of the 21st century.

Keywords

Legal information, information services, law libraries, information resources, Nigeria

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Introduction

The primary aim of every postgraduate law student is to gain more knowledge on their field of study and obtain their qualification in record time. Appropriate legal information resources facilitate high academic performance and knowledge of the best legal practices. Such legal information resources provide support for effective learning and research. Postgraduate law students in this study are students who have already obtained a bachelor's degree and are at a university to acquire an advanced degree, such as Postgraduate diploma, Masters and PhD. As posited by Study portal (2021) qualifications in Law, Master of Laws (LL.M.) and the Graduate Diploma in Law which is generally acquired certain numbers of years of full-time legal studies and are internationally recognised postgraduate degrees. These programs are pursued by Law students and professionals, for attaining in-depth legal expertise and enhancement of their career prospects. For such important professions that has to do with factual information, law among others; appropriate information are often needed for accuracy and being up-to-date.

Information resources as stated by Abiola (2020) are infrastructure or material that provides content and information services for the user. Ternenge and Kashimana (2019) explained information resources to be those materials, strategies, apparatuses or consultations that generally aid researchers in ensuring improved research development as well as all forms of information carriers that can be used to enable effective developmental projects and research activities.

Information resources according to Ubwa, Gbuushi, Ianna and Iornum, (2021) are those materials that provide knowledge to the user. These resources may be observations, people, speeches, documents, pictures, among others which have a great role to play in developing the society by creating awareness, entertaining, informing and most importantly educating the library users and the society at large through maximum utilization. Ternenge and Kashimana (2019) listed information resources to include, databases, electronic books, video, image and sounds resources, referencing resources, online newspapers, official publications, journal and e-journal, electronic dictionaries, encyclopaedia among others. In addition, Information resources according to Shuaibu (2016) are materials containing records of existing knowledge. The materials are usually consulted for aid and for information on a given topic, theme, an event, date, figure, place, word and an event. They are the totality of acquired library resources gathered together by the library for its users.

Information resources can be in any format, such as print and electronic information resources. Davis (2021) defined print resources as those sources of information that have been published in hard copies in printed format, such as printed books, trade journals, theses and dissertations, daily newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, government reports and other printed documents containing relevant information, while non-printed or electronic information resources include films, disc records, filmstrips, slides, audiotapes, videotapes, compact discs and computer software.

Statement of the Problem

The Law profession thrives on information for survival as law is the union of information and power. The legal profession requires the use of accurate, relevant and timely information resources and services for effective legal activities. Every legal information is a treasure and any gap in access to information constitutes a problem. Law libraries play a vital role in the provision of the legal information resources and services to support teaching, learning, practices, research and adequately meet the information needs of its user community which the postgraduate law students forms a significant part of.

Inadequacy in the provision of information resources in the law library, unavailability of the needed information and lack of innovative services among others, are perceived to breed lack of interest and can create a strong impression that law library never has adequate and current legal information resources and services to furnish the information needs of its users, thereby undermining the information seeking and library patronage of postgraduate law students. This will result in poor academic performance and research output by this group of users. Only a law library with adequate information resources can provide good information services and satisfactorily meet the information need of its users. It therefore become imperative to carry out this study to identify the information resources and services of postgraduate law students, Thus, this work seeks to bridge the gap by providing empirical evidence to ascertain the availability and adequacy of legal information resources and services in federal university law libraries in selected Nigerian universities.

Research Objectives

1. Find out the available law library services provided to postgraduate law students in federal university law libraries in selected Nigerian universities.
2. Determine the adequacy of available legal information resources in meeting the information of postgraduate law students.

Research Questions

1. What are the available law library services provided for postgraduate law students in federal university law libraries in south-east, Nigeria?
2. What is the adequacy of available legal information resources in meeting the information needs of postgraduate law students?

Review of Related Literature

Library Services provided to Postgraduate Law Students

A law library is a facility that has been specially created for people in law profession and people needing special legal information resources to search, access, and use the legal information resources that have been acquired, processed, and organised. The law library is responsible for the operational and strategic management of its user services, promoting law library services, and implementing the library's mission. Law library services are those services that are provided to law library users to aid them in the use of library and easy retrieval of information resources that are relevant to the successful achievement of their

academic goals. Obiamalu and Echedom (2021) opined that library services are those services which could be rendered physically or virtually by library personnel to the library users. These are the assistance rendered by the law librarian to the law library patrons in a bid to meet their information needs. Ezema and Akpom (2018) stated that this service is expected to provide the information sought by user, it should anticipate as well as meet the users' needs and also encourage user awareness to fulfil individual needs. Harande and Umar (2021) stated that the baseline of law libraries is expected to be constituted by the type of information services it provides. There should be availability of adequate information resources, expertise and technological support in Law libraries to effectively provide relevant library services.

According to Umar (2019) the law library is expected to be proactive, vibrant and be abreast of the latest developments in information dissemination to maintain relevance and keep up with the multifarious needs and expectations of law library users. It is therefore important for law libraries to provide services and facilities that meet the information needs of its users. Examples of these services provided in the law library as mentioned by the author include: general reference service, loaning of books and other materials for photocopying services, selective dissemination of information and indexing services, assisting users to locate information items, orientation, services, one-to-one library instruction services, abstracting services, translation services, referral services, document delivery services, bibliographic verification services, bibliotherapy services, reader advisory services, selective dissemination of information services, display of new arrival services, table of content services, in-service training of staff, production of guide for publicity and education, contributing to or preparing library publication services. Special library such as law library provides special services to their library users.

Eze-Onwuzuruike (2020) further described some law library services as innovative services. These innovative services were defined as the use and improvement of various latest technologies to provide better and timely services to users at a reasonable cost for the development of the user and the society at large through computers and the internet. Eze-Onwuzuruike listed the innovative library services offered in law libraries as: Translation, Literature search, Use of OPAC and WEB OPAC for searching library materials, Email-communication, Legal databases, Law blogs, Collaborative Encyclopaedia and Really Simple Syndication (RSS). Through these innovative law library services according to the author, meeting the information needs of law students through electronic or digital means is assured (Eze-Owuzuruike, 2020).

It is observed that there are no known legal standards for law library services from the Council of Legal Education (CLE) nor the National university commission (NUC) while there is an existing legal standards for law library collections as stipulated in CLE standards. This constitutes a challenge as there exists a lack of uniformity in the type of law library services provided within the law libraries in Nigerian universities. This prompted

the suggestion by Hassani et al (2018) that government should set standards for library services and ensure adherence to them.

Owuchi (2022) is of the opinion that services provided by the law library will depend on the information resources available to it. Notably, a small law library with a handful of staff cannot provide the range of services and breadth of expertise that a large and well-resourced law library can offer. It is easy to forget that, in an era when information services are increasingly available online, there is still need for those services which are still commonly thought of one that a library render. It includes the provision of books and non-book materials for reference and loan. Also, library staff that interacts with customers and provides them with documents or information that the patrons need. There is probably a physical part of a location where desks/and or workstations for quiet study are provided. We have the book borrowing service, obtaining books from external libraries to provide for the erudite or specialist needs of the legislators which cannot be provided from the libraries and information resources. There is the law library's close links in the form of interlibrary loan with other libraries to meet such information needs requirements. The law library and information centre have an inherent obligation to provide information services to support the information needs of postgraduate law students as appropriate to the library's mission.

Legal Information Resources in Law Library

Adequacy of available legal information resources in the law library can be defined as the extent with which available information resources in the law library are sufficient to effectively satisfy the information need of the users it is provided for. Edet (2014) stated that adequacy of library resources is the relation between its size and ability of the library to respond to the needs of its users. Only few scholars have carried out an evidence based research on the adequacy of information resources and services in relation to legal profession which summarises the dearth in literature on this topic. Looking at the state of arts on adequacy of available legal information resources to postgraduate law student, CLE and NUC have taken their time to draft a standard checklist to ensure an authorized guideline for adequate provision of relevant resources to the student.

Many factors such as lack of internet connectivity, poor funding, scarcity/high cost of legal materials, inadequate subscription to legal databases among others have been noted by Owuchi (2020) as some of the challenges that affect the availability and adequacy of relevant legal information resources. The effect of these challenges is very sad as noted by Olorunnfemi and Mosert (2012) how law students mostly rely on readily available information resources due to the nature of their profession and can easily be dissatisfied with the inadequacy of same in the already established law library. Adequacy of information resources is a factor that affects the extent to which information needs are met and the use of libraries. It takes preeminence in education, intellectual and national development as the provision of books in quantity and quality to library users is key

(Monokpo, Ntogo-Saghanen & Egesimba, 2019). Olugu (2017) highlighted the relevance of library users as a very important partner, who plays a central determining role in the collection building of any library. The library collections should align with its users' information needs. The collection should support the programme curriculum and match with new developments in the area of research. In this vein, the participation of the lecturers in the identification and selection of appropriate information resources to be procured for the law library is paramount. In the law library, information resources selected and acquired are meant to support the curriculum, which means that the input of the teaching staff is usually required in selecting appropriate materials for teaching and learning within the faculty. The NUC (2015) minimum standard for legal education, stated that, in the acquisition of law library holdings, law faculties must be fully consulted and their recommendations seriously considered. This means that acquisition by law libraries should be guided by the recommendations of the law faculties.

The need to update the holdings of law library with new issues of law reports, journals and current editions of books should be acquired from time to time is highly recommended. Wanyonyi et al (2018) enumerated members that constitute the library committee for acquisition to include the university librarian, members of management and lecturers representing different faculties and also a representative from the student union government. They can select information resources for different disciplines offered in different faculties. Law lecturers' involvement in decisions about library information resources is not only a norm but is essential for the decisions about purchase/ acquisition of legal information resources. The university academic staffs' opinion of a library collection is the aggregate of the individual views, attitudes, and beliefs about the extent to which the library has met the demands of the curriculum. The development of a university law library collection should be a cooperative effort between law librarians and teaching staff. Wanyonyi, et al (2018) noted that a deficient collection can have an adverse effect on the faculty and institution in general. Lecturers' opinion as a process of evaluating law library collection development can assist in identifying areas of strengths and weaknesses in the collection so that gaps and inadequacies can be filled up. Print information resources can be beefed up with the electronic information resources. These resources can be made available and adequate to meet the information needs of postgraduate law students through the use of ICT gadgets.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A total of 252 postgraduate law students of 2019/2020 and 2020/2021 sets in the University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu Campus and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. There was no sampling technique as the study population was small and manageable, the population was used in its entirety. The instrument used for data collection was a self-constructed questionnaire and an observation checklist. The reliability of the instrument was established using

Cronbach Alpha and Kuder Richardson (K-R) checklist methods. The result of the coefficient were .93 and .89 respectively. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. Percentages were used to analyse data obtained from the research questions. Data with the scale of 50% and above is accepted and data below 50% is rejected.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the available library services provided to postgraduate law students in federal university law libraries in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 1: Percentages of the available law library services provided to postgraduate law students

| S/ N | ITEMS | N | Provid ed | Not Provid ed | Provid ed (%) | Remark |
|---------|--|-----|--------------|---------------------|------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Reference Service | 241 | 212 | 29 | 88% | Provided |
| 2 | Legal Research Services | 241 | 217 | 24 | 90% | Provided |
| 3 | Recreation/Leisure Services | 241 | 34 | 207 | 14% | Not Provided |
| 4 | Current awareness Services (CAS) | 241 | 140 | 101 | 58% | Provided |
| 5 | Selective dissemination of Information (SDI) | 241 | 159 | 82 | 66% | Provided |
| 6 | Inter-Library Loan (ILL) | 241 | 106 | 135 | 44% | Not Provided |
| 7 | Literature search | 241 | 217 | 24 | 90% | Provided |
| 8 | Compilation of bibliographies | 241 | 231 | 10 | 96% | Provided |
| 9 | Indexing and Abstracting | 241 | 241 | 0 | 100% | Provided |
| 10 | Knowledge management | 241 | 178 | 63 | 74% | Provided |
| 11 | Preservation and conservation | 241 | 154 | 87 | 64% | Provided |
| 12 | Information literacy | 241 | 217 | 24 | 90% | Provided |
| 13 | Archiving | 241 | 213 | 28 | 88% | Provided |
| 14 | Consultancy | 241 | 193 | 48 | 80% | Provided |
| 15 | Book editing | 241 | 92 | 149 | 38% | Not Provided |
| 16 | Book end support | 241 | 116 | 125 | 58% | Provided |
| 17 | Library and shelf guide | 241 | 202 | 39 | 84% | Provided |
| 18 | Library talk | 241 | 96 | 145 | 40% | Not Provided |
| 19 | Orientation | 241 | 116 | 125 | 48% | Not Provided |
| 20 | Advocacy | 241 | 87 | 154 | 36% | Not Provided |
| 21 | Display of new arrivals | 241 | 169 | 72 | 70% | Provided |
| 22 | Bindery/ Reprographic Services | 241 | 135 | 106 | 56% | Provided |
| 23 | User education | 241 | 188 | 53 | 78% | Provided |
| 24 | Translation Services | 241 | 14 | 227 | 6% | Not Provided |
| 25 | Documentation Services | 241 | 145 | 96 | 60% | Provided |
| 26 | Statistical data analysis | 241 | 92 | 149 | 38% | Not Provided |
| 27 | Online Search Services | 241 | 116 | 125 | 48% | Not Provided |
| 28 | Internet Search Skills | 241 | 135 | 106 | 56% | Provided |
| 29 | Training | 241 | 28 | 213 | 12% | Not Provided |
| 30 | CD ROM Search Services | 241 | 63 | 178 | 26% | Not Provided |
| 31 | Bibliotherapy services | 241 | 72 | 169 | 30% | Not Provided |

| | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------|
| 32 | Digital technology library services | 241 | 188 | 53 | 78% | Provided |
| 33 | Wikis | 241 | 92 | 149 | 38% | Not Provided |
| 34 | Podcast | 241 | 77 | 164 | 32% | Not Provided |
| 35 | Really simple syndication (RSS) | 241 | 82 | 159 | 34% | Not Provided |
| 36 | Blog | 241 | 77 | 164 | 32% | Not Provided |
| 37 | Folksonomy | 241 | 43 | 198 | 18% | Not Provided |

Table 1 shows that only 20 (54%) out of the 37 services expected to be available for postgraduate law students were available and provided to them as above.

With 54% of the required legal information services being provided to the PG Law students, the findings showed that the legal information resources are available in the federal university law libraries in South-East, Nigeria, although more innovative services need to be established to completely commensurate with the demands of the 21st century. Services such as the inter library loan is a type of service that will aid in ensuring user satisfaction. Services such as book editing, statistical data analysis, Online search services, advocacy are on high demand especially for postgraduate students for their research purposes and RSS will facilitate effective communication of relevant/timely information to the library community. This corroborated Iwhiwhu and Okorundu (2012) which stated that the law library is expected to be proactive, vibrant and abreast of the latest developments in information dissemination to maintain relevance and keep up with the multifarious needs and expectations of law library users.

Research Question 2: What is the adequacy of available legal information resources in meeting the information needs of postgraduate law students?

Table 2 Percentages of adequacy of available legal information resources in meeting the information needs of postgraduate law students

| 1 | Laws and statutes (local) | | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------|-----------------|-------------|----------|---------------|----------|--------------|
| S/N | Federal Universities | Number of items | (AD) Number | (AD) (%) | (N/AD) Number | (N/AD) % | Decision |
| | NAU | 17 | 17 | 100% | 0 | 0% | Adequate |
| | UNEC | 17 | 9 | 53% | 8 | 47% | Adequate |
| 2 | Laws and statutes (foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 17 | 9 | 53% | 8 | 47% | Adequate |
| | UNEC | 17 | 6 | 35% | 11 | 65% | Not adequate |
| 3 | Foreign law reports | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 23 | 15 | 65% | 8 | 35% | Adequate |
| | UNEC | 23 | 13 | 57% | 10 | 43% | Adequate |
| 4 | Local law reports | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 27 | 23 | 85% | 4 | 15% | Adequate |
| | UNEC | 27 | 20 | 74% | 7 | 26% | Adequate |
| 5 | Local journals | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|----|----|-----|----|-----|--------------|
| | NAU | 56 | 22 | 39% | 34 | 61% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 56 | 28 | 50% | 28 | 50% | Adequate |
| 6 | Foreign journals | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 64 | 3 | 5% | 61 | 95% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 64 | 28 | 44% | 36 | 56% | Not adequate |
| 7 | Constitutional law | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 36 | 24 | 67% | 12 | 33% | Adequate |
| | UNEC | 36 | 21 | 58% | 15 | 42% | Adequate |
| 8 | Criminal law (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 56 | 20 | 36% | 36 | 64% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 56 | 24 | 43% | 32 | 57% | Not adequate |
| 9 | Company law and practice (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 17 | 3 | 18% | 14 | 82% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 17 | 6 | 35% | 11 | 65% | Not adequate |
| 10 | Legal system (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 18 | 6 | 33% | 12 | 67% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 18 | 10 | 56% | 8 | 44% | Adequate |
| 11 | Law of contracts (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 19 | 7 | 37% | 12 | 63% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 19 | 9 | 47% | 10 | 53% | Not adequate |
| 12 | Land law/property law (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 52 | 5 | 10% | 47 | 90% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 52 | 28 | 54% | 24 | 46% | Adequate |
| 13 | Family law (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 10 | 6 | 60% | 4 | 40% | Adequate |
| | UNEC | 10 | 4 | 40% | 6 | 60% | Not adequate |
| 14 | Evidence (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 14 | 7 | 50% | 7 | 50% | Adequate |
| | UNEC | 14 | 7 | 50% | 7 | 50% | Adequate |
| 15 | Equity and torts (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 18 | 5 | 28% | 13 | 72% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 18 | 10 | 56% | 8 | 44% | Adequate |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|---|----|---|-----|----|-----|---------------|
| 16 | Conflicts (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 12 | 3 | 25% | 9 | 75% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 12 | 8 | 67% | 4 | 33% | Adequate |
| 17 | Taxation (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 7 | 6 | 86% | 1 | 14% | Adequate |
| | UNEC | 7 | 3 | 43% | 4 | 57% | Not available |
| 18 | Insurance (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 6 | 4 | 67% | 2 | 33% | Adequate |
| | UNEC | 6 | 2 | 33% | 4 | 67% | Not adequate |
| 19 | Business and banking law (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 10 | 3 | 30% | 7 | 70% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 10 | 3 | 30% | 7 | 70% | Not adequate |
| 20 | Jurisprudence (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 28 | 3 | 11% | 25 | 89% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 28 | 9 | 32% | 19 | 68% | Not adequate |
| 21 | Copyrights law (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 5 | 2 | 40% | 3 | 60% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 5 | 2 | 40% | 3 | 60% | Not adequate |
| 22 | International/public law (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 12 | 2 | 17% | 10 | 83% | Not adequate |
| | UNEC | 12 | 8 | 67% | 4 | 33% | Adequate |
| 23 | Labour law (local and foreign) | | | | | | |
| | NAU | 9 | 6 | 67% | 3 | 33% | Adequate |
| | UNEC | 9 | 5 | 56% | 4 | 44% | Adequate |

(AD) = Adequate (N/AD) = Not adequate

Table 2 showed that only 7 (30%) out of the 23 listed aspects of law based on CLE standards were adequate in federal university law libraries in South-East, Nigeria

The findings to this present study showed that legal information resources are not adequate in federal university law libraries in South-East, Nigeria with the overall percentage as low as 30%. Most of the information resources available are inadequate to meet the information needs of the postgraduate law students. Inadequacy can result in poor utilization of the library resources as concurred by Olorunnfemi and Mosert (2012) that law students mostly rely on readily available information resources due to the nature of their profession and can

easily be dissatisfied with the inadequacy of same in the already established library. Wanyonyi, et al (2018) also noted that a deficient collection can have an adverse effect on the faculty and institution in general. This statement is supported by Ogbuiyi and Okpe (2013) that further revealed how some disciplines in a university with inadequate library stock were denied accreditation by NUC. Law libraries should ensure that adequate information resources are made available to the postgraduate law student as this discloses the size and ability of a library to respond to the needs of its users (Edet, 2014).

Conclusion

Some law library services available in the federal university law libraries provided to the postgraduate law students include indexing and abstracting, compilation of bibliographies, legal research services, literature search, information literacy, reference service, archiving, library and shelf guide, consultancy, user education, digital technology library services, knowledge management, display of new arrivals, selective dissemination of information (SDI), preservation and conservation, documentation services, current awareness services (CAS), book end support, bindery/ reprographic services and internet search skills.

The legal information resources available were inadequate and will not be enough to meet the information need of the postgraduate law students in terms of adequacy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

Law librarians should improve their skills in the use of some relevant electronic applications (apps.) in other to opt their game in providing innovative law library services that will capture interest, improve patronage and enhance information need satisfaction among the postgraduate law students.

The university management should fund the library. The funds will necessitate current and adequate acquisition of legal information resources. They should ensure that all the or a reasonable number of relevant legal information databases are subscribed to, make provision for good internet connectivity, and make provisions for an alternative power generating source for an up-to-date information, uninterrupted power supply and a seamless experience towards an academic excellence.

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