

The Information Needs of Librarians in Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State.

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Abstract

Librarians are custodians of information and as such examining the information needs of librarians is paramount. The study was conducted to find out librarians' information needs, access points to such information needs, the types of information needed by Librarians that are available in Niger Delta University (NDU) and the problems encountered while searching for information. 21 professional librarians were purposely sampled for the study based on availability. A self-constructed questionnaire tagged "Questionnaire on Information Needs of Librarians" (QINL) was the sole instrument for data collection. The data was analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. The findings of the study show that librarians basically need academic information. Although the information needs are available in NDU, they are not adequate and so do not meet the demands of Librarians. Libraries and the internet using PCs and handheld devices were the major access points to the information needs. However, irrelevant and outdated resources, poor internet connectivity amongst others were problems the librarians faced when seeking information. It was recommended that efforts should be made on seeking information that could solve library users' needs, information about health and even foreign affairs. There should be adequate provision for library and information resources for a

better service delivery. Also, Internet Service Providers (ISPs) should reduce their cost of Internet Service Provision to that affordable to individuals in this part of the world.

Keywords: Information, information needs, librarians, Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State.

Introduction

Information is essential for health, survival, education, social, cultural, political and psychological enrichment. It is invaluable to mankind. According to Ugwoke and Asogwa (2015) information is nothing but a class of events. It occurs to meet a particular purpose. Information plays a significant role in our various professional and personal lives and librarians are not exempted. Librarians need information to work properly and improve their performance (Igbinovia M. O. & Ikenwe, 2014). We use information to enhance our knowledge and then apply that knowledge to improve what we do (Ackland, 2010). Information is in fact very crucial for the acquisition of knowledge and development. This explains the rationale for the introduction and acquisition of information resources in libraries around the world to facilitate scholarly communication (Ekenna & Ukpebor, 2012). Thus, in this study, information exists and the “purpose” is to meet the needs of librarians. In other words, an unfulfilled need which can be met by the provision of existing information is an information need (Ugwoke & Asogwa, 2015). In the same vein, Reitz (2004) defined information need as a gap

in a person's knowledge that when experienced at a conscious level as a question, gives rise to a search for an answer. If the need is urgent, the search may be pursued with diligence until the desire is fulfilled. Every individual the world over has one information need or the other to cater for their quest to resolve issues intimate to them in their day to day life. Librarians like other professionals in their respective fields have need for information to solve problems and queries from users and their personal needs. As information professionals, librarians are engaged in various forms of activities aimed at rendering quality information provision services for consumption by mankind.

Libraries see their responsibility as ensuring that the use of information sources, resources, and services are maximised to benefit its users (Bhatti, 2009). Librarians work thoroughly to ensure that users are satisfied and their information needs are met as they use the library and information resources and services. It is pertinent however to note that it takes one to solve the information needs of others.

Niger Delta University Library is the "information warehouse" of Niger Delta University (NDU), Wilberforce Island, Bayelsa State. It is well staffed with quality professional librarians with lots of experience in library practice. Students and faculty staff of the university are the major users of the library. The library management are charged with the responsibility of

ensuring that information resources and personnel are properly organized to meet the needs of users. Majority of the library staff are academics and some of them are pursuing higher degrees in Library and Information Science and related disciplines. All this is geared towards gaining a mastery of the discipline of librarianship and by so doing, reshaping themselves for a better understanding of the discipline to foster quality service delivery to their clientele. Therefore, the type of information a librarian needs depends entirely on the librarian (Iwara, 2015).

The librarian as a custodian of knowledge is expected to have a measure of information needed to satisfy his quest for knowledge. According to Igbinoia and Ikenwe (2014) the usefulness of qualified librarians are no longer in doubt as they are concerned with every aspect of information circle which involves generation, processing, storage, retrieval, dissemination and preservation of information. Thus it is expected of them to be acquainted with current trends in librarianship for them to be able to blend into the routines of generation, processing, storage, retrieval, dissemination and preservation of information.

There are various channels where information can be retrieved. It is expected that librarians in their quest for knowledge need to harness such channels of information. Ola and Osagie (2011) defined access as a means of approaching,

entering or coming in contact with something. Like every other information seeker, librarians ought to have knowledge of where to retrieve relevant information resources useful to them. Hence, the myriad of access points available to them only provides alternative means of where to look out for needed information. Remarkable advances in information and communication technology (ICT), as well as the expansion of electronic resources have changed many aspects of information resources, services and library environments. The diverse needs of users in terms of access to information resources and services in the digital age require new methods for keeping pace with these developments. In order to fulfil their essential role in facilitating research, academic libraries and librarians need to identify the ways in which their users access information and provide wider access to information services and resources to guarantee optimal service delivery to their users (Ismail, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

Librarians are information professionals charged with the responsibility of providing information needed by their clientele. That they are information providers does not mean they too do not need information. Hence, it is pertinent to look into the fact that in the course of discharging their duties, they need information to enhance their performance. Therefore, this study

sought to unravel the information needs of librarians in Niger Delta University (NDU), Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the information needs of Librarians in NDU, Bayelsa State: the objectives are to find out:

- i. The types of information needs of librarians in NDU
- ii. The types of information materials that are available in NDU
- iii. The access points to such information needed by the librarians
- iv. The problems librarians encounter while seeking for information

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

- i. What are the types of information needs of librarians in NDU?
- ii. What are the types of information needs of librarians that are available in NDU
- iii. What are the access points to the information needs of the librarians?
- iv. What are the problems librarians encounter while seeking for information?

Review of Related Literature

The growth of every nation depends on the content of information at its disposal. The citizenry of a country need

information to blend into the system and to contribute to the growth and development of such a country. The job of a librarian is to meet the information needs of the community of users which he/she serves; this does not exonerate librarians from seeking information for themselves. Several studies have been conducted in the area of information needs of different professionals. For instance, Ugwoke and Asogwa (2015) in their study of information needs of lectures in the faculty of business Administration Universities of Nigeria noted that information is nothing but a class of events that occurs to meet a particular purpose. Information plays a significant role in one's life particularly professionals and librarians, students and academicians are not an exception.

Igbinovia and Ikenwe (2014) acknowledged that librarians need information to work properly and improve their performance. Reitz (2004) defined information need as a gap in a person's knowledge that when experienced at a conscious level as a question, gives rise to a search for an answer. Adding that if the need is urgent, the search may be pursued with diligence until the desire is fulfilled. Abdullahi, Igbinovia and Solanke (2015) found that students need information to prepare for examination and test, course work, assignment and so on while other information seekers need information for self-development, general awareness and to up-skill their knowledge.

Madukoma and Opeke (2013), in their study revealed that staff members of universities have varied information needs ranging from professional information, internal University information, and information on youths/juvenile, social life, economy and to general management information. Corroborating this view, Alwis, Majid and Chaudhry (2006) cited in van and Davison (2011) stressed that staff information behaviour reflects a relationship with they work settings and information environment which highlights a need to understand problem situations as a precursor to understanding how to seek and use information.

Faculty staff needs information on social welfare, health economy, teaching and research (Nnadozie & Nnadozie 2008). Further supporting this view, Igbinovia and Ikenwe (2014) in their study on information seeking behaviour of academic librarians for effective performance found that information plays a significant role in the performance of their duty. Adding that, the predominant information needed by librarians are enormous ranging from information on library Management trends and librarianship, professionalism, actualization of library objectives, job prospects, self-development, pension scheme and retirement life.

Ekenna & Ukpebor (2012) in their study observed that information is very crucial for the acquisition of knowledge and

development, which further explains the rationale for the introduction and acquisition of electronic information resources around the world to facilitate scholarly communication.

On librarians access points to information and seeking behaviours, Forzani (1998) stated that students rely on e-books, hard copy textbooks and journals to enhance their study. Corroborating this assertion, Ajiboye and Tella (2007) examined the information seeking behaviour of post graduate students, and revealed that the internet is the most consulted source, followed by students' class notes and handouts. However, Valentine (1993) had a different outcome on a similar study. He found that post graduate students look for the fastest ways that would lead to satisfactory results when carrying out research thereby going for electronic information sources first. Ismail (2010) is of the view that for academic libraries and librarians to fulfil their essential role in facilitating research, they need to identify the ways in which their users access information and provide wider access to information services and resources to guarantee optimal service delivery to their users.

On problems librarians encounter while seeking for information, Nnadozie and Nnadizie (2008) opened that the major impediment to information access is the lack of current and relevant sources. Supporting this view, Okonoko, Emeke-Ukwu and Ayomanor (2015) in their study lamented that poor

searching skills, poor computer skills, lack of time, irrelevant resources in the library, irrelevant resources popping out of search engines results and many others were the problems faced by information seekers. Within the Southern parts of Nigeria, Bayelsa State to be precise, where the Niger Delta University (NDU) is located, there is no record of any study aimed at finding the information needs of librarians and this is the gap which this study tends to fill. Keeping this gap in view, this study aims at finding the information needs of librarians in Niger Delta University (NDU).

Methodology

This study is a descriptive research which involves data collection to elicit information on the information needs of librarians in Niger Delta University (NDU). This would enable the researchers to explore the current situation in the study. Dime (2015) citing Ruggai (2005) defines descriptive survey as an attempt to picture or document current condition or attitudes; it describes what exist at the moment. The NDU library has a total population of 21 academic librarians who were all sampled for the study. The purposive sampling technique (based on availability) was adopted for selecting the sample. The sole instrument for data collection was the questionnaire tagged “Questionnaire on the Information Needs of librarians” (QINL).

The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. This study was conducted during the 2016/2017 academic session.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Librarians' Rank

Rank	Frequency	(%)
Principal Librarian	1	4.8
Senior Librarian	7	33.3
Librarian I	3	14.3
Librarian II	4	19.0
Assistant Librarian	6	28.6
Total	21	100

Source: NDU Library Staff Nominal Roll, November 2017

The data on table 1 shows that the bulk of librarians who were sampled were Senior Librarians (33.3%), Librarian II (19.0%) and Assistant Librarians (28.6%).

Research Question 1: What are the types of information needs of librarians in NDU

Table 2 shows the types of information need of Librarians in NDU

Rank	Freq	%
Information relating to research	18	86%
Information on professional growth in librarianship	12	57%
Information to solve library user's needs	9	49%
Information of self-development	10	48%
Information about current developments in Librarianship	8	38%
Information about economy	17	81%
Information about culture and social life	12	57%
Information relating to library management	21	100%
Information relating to library ethics	8	38%
Information relating to pension scheme/ retirement life	12	57%

Table 2 shows the information needs of librarians. The data shows that 18 (86%) of the respondents needs information relating to research, 12(57%) said they need information on professional growth in librarianship, information about culture and social life as well as information relating to pension and retirement life. Furthermore, 9(49%) needs information to solve library user's need, while 8(38%) need information about current development in librarianship, 10(48%) need information about

the economy. Also, 21(100%) need information relating to library management and 8(38%) need information relating library ethics.

Research Question 2: What are the types of information needs of librarians that are available in NDU? Table 3 shows the types of information needs of librarians that available in NDU.

Rank	Freq	%
Information relating to research	16	76%
Information on professional growth in librarianship	11	52%
Information to solve library user's needs	9	49%
Information to pass examinations	7	33%
Information on current developments in Librarianship	9	49%
Information about economy	15	71%
Information about culture and social life	10	48%
Information relating to library management	15	71%
Information relating to library ethics	7	33%
Information relating to pension scheme/ retirement life	8	38%

Table 3 examined the types of information needed by librarians that available in Niger Delta University (NDU). The data shows the level of availability of these information needs. 16(76%) of the respondents says information on research is available in NDU, 11(57%) equally agreed that information on professional

growth in librarianship is available. Also, 9(49%) says information to solve library user's need and information on self development are available. Furthermore, 7(33%) attest to the availability of information on current development in librarianship and information relating to library ethics. 15(71%) confirmed the availability of information about economy and information relating to library management. The data further reveals the availability of the following information needs in NDU. 10(48%) information about culture and social life and 8(38%) affirms the availability of information on pension scheme and retirement life in NDU.

Research Question 3: What are the access points to Librarians' information needs? Table 4 shows the access points to librarians' information needs.

ITEMS	FREQ	(%)
Library	19	90%
Personal Computer (PC)	17	81%
CDs-ROMs	0	0%0
Cyber Cafes	5	24%
Tablets	17	81%
Phones	20	95%
Laptops	19	90%
Online/Electronic Databases	10	48%

The librarians were told to indicate their various access points to information which they seek to meet their information needs and it was found that 19 (90%) of the respondents use libraries as their access point to information, 17 (81%) made use of PCs, 10 (48%) visited electronic databases, none made use of CD-ROMs, 5 (24%) made use of internet cafes. Librarians also made use of handheld devices like phones 20 (95), laptops 19 (90%) and tablet 17 (81%).

Research Question 4: what are the problems Librarians encounter while seeking for information

Table 5 shows the problems Librarians encountered while seeking for information

Problems	Freq	(%)
Inadequacy of quality information resources in libraries	17	81%
Slow internet connectivity	21	100%
Unavailability of quality resources online	9	43%
Too many irrelevant items popping out of search engines results	12	57%
High cost of internet subscription	9	43%
Availability of outdated resources in libraries	15	71%
Lackadaisical attitude of librarians to information seekers	7	33%
Poor information search skill	5	24%

Table 5 shows the problems librarians encounter while seeking for information. 17 (81%) of the respondents stated that one of the problems they encounter is inadequacy of quality information resources in libraries, 21 (100%) decried slow internet connectivity, 15 (71%) lamented the availability of outdated resources in libraries and 12 (57%) decried the problem of too many irrelevant items popping out of search engines results.

Discussion of Findings

From the data collected, it is certain that all the librarians that took part in this study were professional librarians. The findings further shows that the respondents 18(86%) need information relating to research, while 10 (48%) need information on self-development. This means that librarians need basically academic information. It is therefore worthwhile to state that majority of these librarians are either involved in research or are students of tertiary institutions with the aim of furthering their study. This finding is in line with that of Abdullahi, Igbinovia and Solanke (2015). The above authors in their study on undergraduates' information needs found that students need information to prepare for examination and test, for course work and assignment; they also need information for self-development, for general awareness or reading to enhance lecture notes.

Furthermore, the findings of this study revealed that 12 (57%) said they need information on professional growth in

librarianship. By implication, the librarians need information that could enhance their knowledge in librarianship. Also, 9 (49%) of the respondents opined that they need information to solve user's needs, 8 (38%) on current developments in librarianship and 17 (81%) about economy. Others, 12 (57%) seek information on culture and social life, 21(100%) about library management, 8 (38%) about library ethics, and 12 (57%) about pension scheme and retirement life. This shows that in as much as librarians basically need information on education, they are also interested in information relating to other areas of life like economy, social life, ethical conducts, and most importantly, library practice.

This finding is in consonance with those of Madukoma and Opeke (2013) whose study reveals that staff members of universities have varied information needs ranging from professional information, internal university information, and information on youths/juvenile, social life, economy and to general management information. Also, Alwis, Majid and Chaudhry (2006) cited in Yan and Davison (2011) stressed that staff information behaviour reflects a relationship with their work settings and information environment which highlights a need to understand problem situations as a precursor to understanding how to seek and use information. Nnadozie and Nnadozie (2008) in their study on information needs of faculty staff found that they need information on social welfare, health, economy,

teaching and research materials. The study also corroborates Igbinovia and Ikenwe (2014) in their study on information seeking behaviour of academic librarians for effective performance. They found out that information plays significant roles in the performance of information professionals in academic libraries. According to them, the predominant information needed by librarians include: information on library management trends and librarianship, professionalism, actualization of library objectives, job prospects, self-development and pension scheme and retirement life. From the foregoing, one would conclude that librarians of Nigerian Universities generally need information based on their different tasks/roles. They also need information on economy, social life and self-development.

On availability of the types of information needs of librarians in NDU, the study shows that 16(76%) of the respondents say information on research are available in NDU. 11 (52%) agreed that information on professional growth in librarianship are also available while 9(49%) says there is the availability of information to solve library users' needs. Ekenna and Ukpebor (2012) opined that information is very crucial for the acquisition of knowledge and development. This explains the rationale for the introduction and acquisition of electronic resources in libraries around the world to facilitate scholarly

communication. Also the study corroborates that of Igbinovia and Ikenwe (2014) that information plays significant roles in the performance of an information professional, stressing that for librarians to work effectively, their information needs must be adequately provided for.

Furthermore, the study reveals that 7 respondents representing 33% attest to the availability of information on current development in librarianship, Nine (9) representing 43% are aware of the availability of information on self-development and 15 (71%) say there are information on economy in NDU. The study corroborates with Igbinovia and Ikenwe 2014 that librarians need information to work properly and improved their performance.

The study further shows that 10(48%) confirms information on culture and social life, 15(71%) agrees that information on library management are available, 7(33%) on library ethics and only 8(38%) affirms the availability of information on pension scheme and retirement life in NDU.

On the librarians' access points to information, the study revealed that 19 (90%) of the respondents use libraries as their access point to information, 17 (81%) made use of PCs, and 10 (48%) visited electronic databases. This finding shows that librarians make use of libraries while seeking for information. Furthermore, none of the respondents made use of CD-ROMs,

however, 5 (24%) of them made use of internet cafes. Librarians also made use of phone 20 (95%) laptop 19 (90%) and tablet 17 (81%). This is a digital age, hence majority of them also made use of PCs and handheld devices for internet navigation to search for information while some made use of electronic databases. This study is in line with Fidzani (1998) conducted a study at University of Botswana, Gaboroneon on the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of graduate students and findings revealed that the students relied on library books, textbooks, and journals. Also, this study agrees with Ajiboye and Tella (2007) who examined the information seeking behaviour of postgraduate students in the University of Botswana. The result of the study revealed that the internet is the most consulted source, followed by students' class notes and handouts which is different from the outcome of a study carried out by Valentine (1993) who conducted a similar study and found out that postgraduate students looked for the fastest way that would lead to satisfactory results when doing research by going for electronic information sources first.

On the problems librarians encounter when seeking for information, the study found that, 17 (81%) of the respondents stated that one of the problems they encounter is inadequacy of quality information resources in libraries. Nnadozie and Nnadozie (2008) also found that the major impediment to

information access is the lack of current and relevant sources. More so, 21 (100%) decried slow internet connectivity, 15 (71%) lamented the availability of outdated resources in libraries and 12 (57%) decried the problem of too many irrelevant items popping out of search engines results. Corroborating this view, Okonoko, Emeka-Ukwu and Ayomanor (2015) in their study lamented that poor internet facilities, irregular power supply, poor searching skills, poor computer skills, lack of time and many others were the problems faced by information seekers. It can therefore be concluded that irrelevant resources in libraries, irrelevant resources popping out of search engines results, poor internet connectivity and others are the problems librarians face while seeking information.

Conclusion

Every individual in his/her work environment need information for one reason or the other. Librarians as custodians of information are not exempted from this. They also need information for one reason or the other. Since several studies have looked into the information needs of different professionals in different work establishments, it becomes pertinent to look into the information needs of librarians to bridge that gap in knowledge. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that librarians need information to work properly and improve

their performance. From the data analysis, majority of the information needed by the librarians are available in NDU but they are not adequate and so do not meet the demands of librarians. The study concluded that librarians place high demands on information relating to research, professional growth in librarianship, information on pension schemes and retirement life among others.

The access points to the information resources they need are libraries, internet sources from handheld devices like phones, laptops, tablets, PCs, and electronic databases. However, librarians encounter some problems while seeking for information, they includes poor internet connectivity relating to slow network, poor information search skill on the part of the librarians, availability of irrelevant and outdated resources in the libraries and search engine results, amongst others.

Recommendations

Based on these conclusions, the following recommendations are hereby provided.

1. There should be adequate provision of information resources and sources to meet the varying information needs of librarians in Niger Delta University (NDU) as this will enable them work properly and improve their performance.
2. There is need for Librarians to constantly update their knowledge of the various access points to information

materials in the library. This is because a mastery of the various search engines could help them (librarians) surmount the challenges of irrelevant results popping out of search engines results.

3. The library management should subscribe to academic databases to serve as supplement to book resources and reduce the burden of equipping the library with outdated and irrelevant resource.
4. The internet service providers (ISPs) should reduce their cost of internet service provision and make it more affordable to individuals in this part of the world.

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