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The Information Seeking Behaviour of Academic Staff In Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro

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Abstract

This paper examines the information seeking behavior of lecturers in Delta State Polytechnic Ozoro. The paper described information needs, information-seeking behaviors and highlights the problems facing lecturers in getting their information. Questionnaire method was used in gathering data from the respondents. The study reveals that over 97% of the respondents use information for academic purpose. It also reveals that 62% of the respondent use the library but only 8% are satisfied with the services being rendered. It also reveals that 85% of the respondents make use of other academic libraries, 69% make use of research institutes libraries, 77% browse the internet while none of the respondents abandon research. The paper recommends that the polytechnic library be allocated more fund in order to sock current and relevant materials, computerize and install internet facilities, organize user education programmes, and library staff development programmes should be kept in view among others.

Keywords: *Information needs, information-seeking behaviors, Delta State Polytechnic*

1.1 Introduction

The Delta State polytechnic, Ozoro was established by law enacted by the Delta state government on November 12, 2002. It was one of the four tertiary institutions established by Chief James Onanefe Ibori's, administration under the Delta State Higher Education Project (DSHEP) which was in partnership with the Delta state ministry of education and Westminster University, London.

The vision of the institution is to become a world-class institution that offers 21st century academic and technological education programmes. The main focus is teaching and research to meet new challenges

for economic development of our increasingly complex society with strong emphasis on technological skill acquisition.

Information is an indispensable and essential ingredient in today's agricultural, educational, social, economic, industrial, political and technological development. Without information; no meaningful development can be achieved.

Information is a commodity, significantly different from other commodities which, if you share with others, you reduce your resources and increase the resources of others. But if you share information with others, you increase resources of others without decreasing your own.

Ucak and Kurbanoglu (1998) denoted information as factual data or advice or opinion, a physical object such as book or journal, or the channel through which a message is conveyed, for example oral or written communication. Ajala (2004) described information as the total series of products and phenomena resulting from mental activities that can be grasped and assimilated in order to realize a new technological development.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Information is a critical instrument for academic work and scholarly development. The instrumental value of information relates to how it empowers the academic enterprise. Information seeking behaviour is the expression of those dispositions that aim to fill the need-gap in information of instrumental value. Invariably, most libraries hardly identify the information seeking behaviour of their clientele, yet the identification of information seeking behaviour is critical to the development of need based information resources and the proactive services.

The articulation of the information seeking dispositions of the clientele community provides the basis for predictable interpretation and meeting of the behavioral patterns. Against the background of the strategic relevance of information seeking behaviour to the development of information resources and services, this study seeks to provide empirical evidence on the information seeking behaviour of academic staff in Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro. That evidence is critical to the development of proactive information services in that context.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This research effort focuses on identifying the information seeking behaviour of the academic staff in Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro. This study specifically attempt to identify:

- i. The information needs of the respondents
- ii. The relevant information sources (both published and unpublished) available to the respondents.
- iii. The frequency of respondent's use of available information system and sources.
- iv. The category of information resources consulted by the respondents in their quest for knowledge.
- v. How the respondents obtain information required for their jobs and commitments.
- vi. The problems encountered by the respondents when seeking information.

1.4 Research Questions

The study will attempt to provide answer to the following questions:

1. What are the types of information required by the respondents in the course of their duties?
2. What are the sources of the information they required?
3. What are the categories/types of information sources they consult?
4. Do the academic staffs of the polytechnic make use of libraries to meet their needs?
5. How often do they make use of the polytechnic library?
6. What information seeking behaviour do they exhibit?
7. To what extent are they satisfied with the functions and services of the polytechnic library?
8. What are the problems encountered by the academic staff in using the library.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Information has been identified as an important factor in improving the agricultural production of any nation. Information is defined as the data for decision making. It is said to be a resource that must be acquired and used in order to make an informed decision.

Every individual whether literate or non-literate needs information in order to take decisions, thus every sector of the population engaged in research to enable them improve, so they need timely and up to date information.

Educators, students and all other information users require the following type of information.

1. Technical/scientific information
2. Commercial information
3. Social/cultural information
4. Legal information.

These four categories of information are generated by the information user populations and they appear in various formats such as monographs, book, journals, reports, feasibility reports, annual report, thesis and dissertation etc. Information therefore is fundamental to life and human beings and it continues to form a whole as well as in carrying out research tasks. The major function of information is to increase the knowledge of the user, to reduce its level of uncertainty or to reduce the variety of choices available.

Opeke (2009) suggested that for active research and job performance, information should be tendered as essential data of value in planning, decision-making and execution of programmes. However, Ajala (2004) opined that for information to be valuable and meaningful, it should be accurate, timely, relevant, reliable, verifiable, understandable and complete. In day-to-day work, lack of self-sufficiency constitutes information needs; these information needs represent gaps in the current knowledge of the user.

The “state of lack” or absence of information required to accomplish a task results into an information need which several authors have variously described and explained. Examples of such authors are: Krikelas (2003), Rhode (2006), Kaniki (2009), Wilson (2004), Afolabi (2013) and Ucak and Kurbanoglu (1998).

Information seeking behavior which results from the recognition of some need is defined by Ucak and Kurbanoglu (1998) “as any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need, in order words, information seeking begins when someone perceives that the current state of possessed knowledge is less than that needed to deal with some issue or problem”. Afolabi (2013) regarded seeking behavior as attributes, utterances, gesture, anger, anxiety, eagerness, reluctance, zeal or any other displayed by an information users in his effort to purchase, acquired or receive news, data, stories or anything that may inform or misinform his knowledge or understanding of something.

It is to be noted that the information-seeking behavior of people vary according to their age, gender, occupation, location, education, exposure and enlightenment, religion and even culture. It can also be influenced by the source of information, content, medium and language of communication, time and nature of information (Afolabi, 2013). Inadequate libraries and information centers with inadequate qualified staff are major problems facing academic staff in getting their information needs met. Other factors are economic squeeze, lack of relevant and up-to-date information bearing materials, lack of knowledge on how to obtain information needed, unconducive operational hours, lack of information and communication technology facilities like internet services, e-mail facilities/services, telephone, photocopiers, computers facilities and CR-ROMS and data basis and finally parental responsibility.

In their research work, Odusanya and Amusa (2013) investigated the information needs and information seeking behavior of faculty of science lecturers at Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye they identified that the information needs of

lecturer are in the areas of their jobs, professional and social issues influences their information seeking behaviour. Their information seeking habits shows that they want personalized and specialized information services as such, they make extensive use of indexes, abstracts, subject bibliographies etc.

Similarly, Oyediram-tidings (2014) in her work information needs and seeking behaviour of library users at Yabe College of technology, indicate a barometric measure of the extent to which a library is meeting the challenges of information provision for its users, her study reveals that there is a low patronage of the library focused by student users which is attributable to unavailability of desired information resources, accessibility problems, obsolesces and absence of on—line facilities. The study recommends the need for the library management to consider users input in their acquisition process and policy among others and concludes that user's studies are essential for prescription, improvement and efficiency of information services. Adelani (2012) lamented that many libraries and information services in Nigeria started without first determining empirically the information needs of those to be served.

The changing information

environment therefore calls for continual research to ensure that knowledge generated by user studies can help to develop information professional's expertise and plan for the future. To ensure this, there is an urgent need to understand and grasp the complex process of “identifying information seeking behaviour of users”. This is a very vital link in the chain of operations from information gathering to dissemination.

3.1 Research Methodology

The questionnaire method was used for this study. The questionnaire sought information on general background, information needs, information sources, information sources consulted within the library and patterns of information seeking behaviour of respondents, problems encountered in seeking information as well as possible suggestions for improving in services were sought.

Sixty (60) questionnaires were administered while fifty-two (52) were returned giving a response rate of (86.67%) while 8(13.33%) could not be collected (were not returned). The choice of this subject field vis-à-vis the Polytechnic was based on the fact that nothing of such has been done in the subject field in thee Polytechnic.

4.1 Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution by qualification/status

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
B.Sc.	2	3.85
M.Sc.	30	57.69
Ph.D.	20	38.59
Total	52	100.00

Table 1 above showed that 20 (38.59) had doctorate degree (Ph.D.), 30 (57.69%) had second-degree (M.Sc.) and only 2 (3.85%) had first degree (B.Sc.)

Table 2: Information Needs

Type of Information Needs	Frequency	%
Teaching & learning	52	17.33
Researching publication	50	16.67
Forming lecture notes	32	10.67
Service to the community	22	7.33
Business and economics	20	6.67
Administrative	18	6.00
Cultural information	18	6.00
Health/family	16	5.33
Current affairs	16	5.33
General knowledge	16	5.33
Job opportunity	14	4.67
Legal information	12	4.00
Daily affairs	8	2.67
Political	6	2.00
Total	300	100.00

Table 2 revealed that 52 (17.33%) respondents need information for teaching and learning, 50 respondents need information for research purpose, 32 (10.67%) need information to form lecture notes and 22 (7.33%) need information in rendering services to the community. From this, it can be inferred that teaching and learning, research activities and publications as well as forming lecture

notes constitute very important academic work/activities. Apart from information relating directly to their job and research interest, respondents indicated that they need information in other areas. Business and economic information ranked highest with 20 (6.67%) followed by administrative and cultural information with 18 (6.00%), 16 (5.33%) of the respondents need information on health/family affairs, current affairs and general knowledge.

Table 3: Information Sources

Sources	Frequency	%
Conference seminar & workshop	44	18.18
Polytechnic library	44	18.18
Agricultural research institutes	36	14.18
Colleagues	30	12.39
Associations/meetings	18	7.44
Television/radio	18	7.44
Private arrangement	18	7.44
Meetings	16	6.61
Other libraries	16	6.61
Non-governmental organization	2	0.83
Total	242	100.00

Table 3 revealed that 44 (18.18%) of the respondents attend conferences, seminars and workshops and/or made use of the proceedings of such conferences and also make use of the polytechnic library to get information. 36 (14.88%) and 30 (12.39%) respondents make use of agricultural research institutes and contact colleagues respectively in order to get agricultural information, similarly, 18 (7.44%) of the respondents use television, associations and private arrangements as information sources 16 (6.61%) make use of meetings and other libraries as their information sources, only 2 (0.33%) make non-governmental organizations as their information source.

Table 4: use of the polytechnic library

Use	Frequency	%
Yes	32	61.53
No	18	34.62
No response	2	3.85
Total	52	100.00

From table 4 above, 32 (61.53%) of the respondents used the polytechnic library while 18 (34.62%) do not use the polytechnic library and 2 (3.85%) gave no response. Factors signified for non-use were lack of relevant and suitable materials (17.65%). Lack of information/communication facilities (17.65%), obsolete information Materials (17.65%), unconducive environment (17.65%) inadequate library opening hours (5.88%) as shown in table 8

Table 5: frequency of use of the polytechnic library

Frequency of Use	Frequency	%
Daily	10	19.23
Weekly	4	7.69
Twice weekly	8	15.38
Monthly	4	7.69
Semesterly	4	7.69
Never	15	28.85
No response	7	13.46
Total	52	100.00

Table 5 revealed that 19.23% (10) respondents make use of the polytechnic library on daily basis, 7.69% (4) on weekly basis, 15.38% (8) twice weekly and 7.69% (4) use the library monthly and per semester while 28.85% (15) never used the library and 13.46% (7) did not respond.

Table 6: use of information materials

Type	Frequency	%
Journals	28	20.29
Books	24	17.39
Newspapers	12	8.69
Magazines	8	5.79
Technical reports	8	5.79
Abstract	6	4.35
Encyclopedia	6	4.35
Thesis and dissertations	6	4.35
Bulletins/newsletters	6	4.35
Government documents	4	2.90
Dictionaries	4	2.90
Indexes	2	1.45
Year books	2	1.45
Audio-visuals	2	1.45
Laboratory manuals	0	0.00
Patents	0	0.00
Directories	0	0.00
No response	20	14.49
Total	138	100.00

Table 6 showed that majority of the respondents that make use of the polytechnic library consulted journals (20.29%), books (17.39%), newspapers (8.69%), magazines (5.79%) and technical reports (5.79%), materials like abstract, encyclopedia, thesis and dissertations as well as the polytechnic bulletins are seldomly used as only 6 (4.35%) of the respondents indicated their use. Similarly, government document (2.90%), dictionaries (2.90%), indexes (1.45%),

yearbooks (1.45%), audio-visuals (1.45%) were rarely used, while laboratory manuals (0.00%), patents (0.00%) and directories (0.00%), patents (0.00%) and directories (0.00%) were never used this might probably be due to the fact that this specialized source may perhaps not be available in the library or not current (obsolete). It can also be deduced that the 20 (14.49%) that gave no response were probably some of those that signified that they do not make use of the polytechnic library as shown in table 4 and those that gave no response for rating of level of satisfaction as shown in table 7.

Table 7: Level of satisfaction

Satisfaction	Frequency	%
Yes	4	7.29
No	30	57.69
Not Always	4	7.69
No Response	14	26.92
Total	52	100.00

Of the respondents, 30 (57.69%) signified that the library materials were not able to satisfy their desire (need) for information 4 (7.69%) signified not always satisfied, 4 (7.69%) signified that the materials are able to satisfy their needs for information and 14 (26.92%) did not respond. This is presented in the table 7 above.

Table 8: Problems encountered

Problems	Frequency	%
Lack of relevant/suitable materials	36	17.65
Lack of information/communication tech.	36	17.65
Obsolete information materials	36	17.65
Unconducive environment	36	17.65
Inadequate sitting and reading spaces	22	10.78
Inadequate library opening hours	12	5.88
Time constraint	6	2.94
Uncooperative library staff	4	1.96
Not aware of where to obtain inf.	4	1.96
Location of the library	2	0.98
No response	10	4.90
Total	204	100.00

From table 8, it can be inferred that the major problems encountered by the respondents when sourcing for information within the polytechnic library are lack of relevant/suitable materials (17.65%), lack of information/communication technologies/facilities (like computers,

internet services, e-mail, telephone, photocopier etc.) (17.65%), obsolete information materials (17.65%), unconducive environment (17.65%), inadequate sitting and reading space (10.78%) and inadequate library opening hours with (5.88%).

Table 9: Information-seeking behaviour

Seeking Behaviour	Frequency	%
Make use of other libraries	44	26.19
Browse internet	40	23.81
Make use of research institute	36	21.43
Purchase book and journals yourself	24	14.29
Go to friends/colleagues	20	11.90
Approach librarian	4	2.38
Abandon the research	0	0.00
Total	163	100.00

From table 9, it can be inferred that none of the respondents abandoned research if the polytechnic library cannot meet their information need, but rather the 44 (26.19%) make use of other libraries, 40 (23.81%) browse internet, 36 (21.43%) make use of research institutes, 24 (14.29%) acquired their

own books and journals and 20 (11.90%) contact their friends and colleagues for research materials. Thus, it can be inferred that lecturers in the polytechnic still carry out research and other academic activities despite the fact that the library cannot meet their information needs.

Table 10: Evaluation of Services

Evaluation	Frequency	%
Very adequate	6	11.54
Adequate	4	7.69
Average	4	7.69
Inadequate	28	53.85
Very inadequate	2	3.85
No response	8	15.38
Total	52	100.00

From table 10 above, it can be inferred that the service of the polytechnic library was inadequate as 28(53.85%) respondents indicated that, while a percentage which is much more higher than others, 2(3.85%) considered it very inadequate, 4 (7.67%) considered it average, 4 (7.69%) considered it adequate while 6 (11.54%) considered it very adequate and 8 (15.38%) gave no response.

Recommendations

The polytechnic managers and

library directors should concentrate more in computerizing the library services, acquiring CD-ROMs and embracing installing the internet and ensuring that these facilities are operational.

Librarians need to be more aggressive in devising means of generating funds for the library, since financial support and budgetary allocation from government are not regular. The library can solicit for gift and donations from individuals and organizations in order to stock high-quality, relevant and up-to-date information bearing materials. Similar to it, is

like internet facilities, photocopying, abstracting and indexing services, inter-library loans, document delivery, longer enquiries, fines from overdue books, bindery as well as photographic work. Efforts should be made that income or revenue so generated is used for upliftment of library services. Similarly, charges for inter-library loans, overdue books as well as for online searches should be periodically reviewed for profit making and not services-rendering only.

The teaching staff should be more involved in book selection process so as to ensure the acquisition of relevant and needed texts especially in these austere times where much financial support are not forthcoming from the government. The polytechnic management should introduce staff library orientation programme for newly recruited academic staff in order to acquaint them with the resources and services of the library. Similarly a user education programme tailored to the needs of each discipline should be embarked upon. This programme should involve the usage of secondary sources such as indexes, abstracts and databases.

To encourage staff patronage, the library should extend its services to include compilation of subject bibliographies and directories, lists of latest arrivals, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, abstracting and indexing of newspapers, research reports and journal articles, maintaining user profiles as well as weeding and preservation of library materials.

The library authorities should embark on human resources sharing which may be in form of exchange programmes either within or outside the country or could be in form of conferences, seminars, workshops and meeting. Thus, librarians share their knowledge in current developments and by this could identify their common as well as peculiar problems and find ways of solving them as this create for a exchange of ideas at different levels especially in this age of

information communication technology.

Conclusion

This study is focused on identifying the information seeking behaviour of academic staff in Delta State Polytechnic, Ozoro. The study concludes that the academic staffs of the polytechnic have complex information needs due to their diverse areas of specialization. Required information are obtained through attendance of conferences, seminars and workshops. They also rely on the polytechnic library, other libraries, research institutes, correspondence with colleagues, association meetings and electronic media.

The respondents make use of their academic libraries but they are less satisfied with the facility. The reasons adduced for these are lack of relevant materials, lack of communication technology, obsolete information sources, unconducive environment and inadequate infrastructures. These reasons account for why some of the respondents do not make use of the library at all, and as such rated the functions and services of the library inadequate.

From the above conclusion, it can be conveniently suggested that the polytechnic library should be allocated more funds for it to be able to stock relevant, current and high quality sources, automate the functions and services of the library, connect the library to the internet, and provide virtual library. Staff development and training should also be encouraged to be able to cope with meeting the information needs of the lecturers. Problem of paucity of funds facing the library can also be alleviated through commercialization of some of its services. With these enumerated suggestions, it is hoped that the information system and services available to the respondents will be improved, and their information needs met.

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