

Imperatives of Managing the Law Library's Collection for Improved Law Research

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper examines the importance of managing the law library collection in order to enhance law research. The paper also looks at new technologies that can be deployed in the law library to enhance law research activities in Nigerian libraries.

Design/Methodology/Approach: Observation method was used in identifying and explaining the information and communication technologies available for the management of law library collections and how they can be deployed.

Findings: the paper found out the various technologies that has improved library services and delivery such as the OPAC, Electronic resources and legal databases like Hein online, Lexis Nexis.

Practical approach: the advent of information and communication technology has enhanced library and information service delivery and made law research easier because information is now more accessible.

Originality/Value: the essence of this paper lies in the need for the library to adapt and embraces the new technologies in the information era heralded by the 21st century which focuses more on faster and easier access to information rather than the physical library holdings. This enables real-time access to the laws of other countries and databases as may be needed in law research.

Keyword: Collection management, Law research, Information technology

Paper Type: Conceptual

Introduction

Library collection refers to the totality of library materials such as books, serials, reports, pamphlets, recording, databases, digital and e-resources as well as online resources etc. that make up the holdings of a particular library. Collection management can be defined as the process of meeting library clientele information needs by offering the right library items, replacing or repairing worn or lost items and creating policies and programs that involve the collection. The proper management of a library's collection is very critical to the survival of the library system as there is no library without a collection. Hence a library is defined and principally identified by its holdings of information resources. Library collection management is a process that involves the acquisition of information resources which reflects both the needs and interest of the community of users through the process of selection, organizing, preserving and maintenance, evaluation, weeding of library holdings (Anyanwu et al 2006; Edoka, 2000;

Okoro, 1991). To provide need-oriented environment, the law library has to evaluate its existing resources and services to further improve them for efficient and effective use. In order to improve and advance legal research, the law library must be deliberately and properly equipped with the right collection.

Collection development is a dynamic and continuous activity. It involves the users, the library staff and subject experts on selection team. It is not an end in itself, but a means to develop a need-based, up-to-date, and balanced collection fit to meet the document and information needs of the users (Gopinath and Rao, 1982). Collection development implies selection, acquisition and evaluation of the library collection in order to see that both print and non-print materials that are available in a library are really useful to the clientele. Its purpose is to find out the users' information needs to; find out the users information needs, select and acquire documents, that are really useful

to the clientele, periodically review the collection for weeding out unwanted and outdated documents from it (Dhimal and Sinha, 2002).Kaur and Gaur (2017) describes collection development as a process of meeting the information needs of users in timely and economic manner using information resources locally as well as from other organizations. It includes a number of activities as:

- Set objectives of collection development.
- Collecting data to determine the information needs
- Create a CDP in written
- Make a selection committee
- Make selection criteria for material
- Acquiring the materials for the collection
- Periodic or continual evaluation of resources
- CREW (Continuous Review, Evaluation and Weeding)

However for effective and efficient collection development in a law library, a collection development policy is adopted and followed.

A collection development policy is essential for a balanced and robust collection. It specifies the scope of the collection, authority for selection, criteria for allocation of funds and for selection of various types of materials, priorities in selection and criteria for weeding Kumar et al (2008). Before the introduction of information technologies in the library and information world, collection development was done manually by sourcing for publisher's brochure. However the advent of information technologies has completely changed the pattern of collection development in the law library, making it easier for librarians as it helps in generating, processing and disseminating collection development information. Shohnaz (2012) stated that ICT has influenced the success of information service and has gone a long way in enhancing the productivity of libraries in all phases. Libraries and information centers therefore, cannot remain effective and efficient today without making use of Information and Communication Technologies. By embracing ICT the law librarian is able to better satisfy clients and attend to their queries within the shortest time; therefore librarians can perform their functions more efficiently. This paper attempts to discuss the impact of Information Technologies on legal research through collection development.

Legal Research

Research refers to any systematic investigation, inquiry or search for information. Researching the law means identifying the rules and regulations that govern conducts and behaviors in a

society. Legal research can be defined as a systematic investigation of problems and matters concerned with law which often requires an enquiry into different types of legal authority. It is the process of identifying and retrieving information necessary to support legal decision making. In its broadest sense, legal research includes each step of a course of action that begins with an analysis of the facts of a problem and concludes with the application and communication of the results of the investigation (Jacobstein and Mersky 2002).

Collection Management: Demand –Driven Acquisition

A major challenge libraries around the globe generally face is that of a slim budgetary allocation. Therefore purchase of information resources is a critical part of collection development and management which requires a certain level of expertise and professionalism because it entails budgeting, resource review based on the existing collection, subject field and patron's need. Lehman 2013 stated that Studies dating back to 1979 show that much of what is purchased using traditional acquisitions methods goes unused, therefore many libraries are now responding to patrons by transferring some of the purchasing power directly to them through demand-driven acquisitions (DDA). This means that rather than basing library acquisition on patron's anticipated needs of anticipated demand, acquisition is done at the point of request. Demand –Driven Acquisition is mostly used when acquiring electronic materials. The record of the book or journal etc is already loaded into the library's catalog, hence the patron can access the information resources from there. According to Lehman (2013) there is an agreed use trigger that informs the vendor as well as the library that the patron is interested in the book. Such triggers could be staying on or navigating through a book or journal for about 5-10 minutes or copying a portion of it and the statistics of use. This informs the decision of the librarian to purchase and add it to the library's collection permanently. This is also applicable in terms of inter-library loans as a purchase order can be made when a borrowing request is made by the patron.

Application of Information Technologies in the Management of Law Library Collection

The importance of information technology in the law library and its collection management cannot be over emphasized. Mohammed (2012) asserts that where ICT tools are not used in the libraries, information is not easily accessed. Information technologies have advanced to such an

extent that their impact on libraries is significant particularly development with regards to digital libraries, internet, electronic publications, CD-ROM etc. The application of ICT to operations in libraries and information centers makes information delivery timely, accurate, precise and relevant. ICT have therefore profoundly revolutionized the world of libraries, librarianship and information profession as in other works of life (Madu and Adeniran, (2000); Okereke, 2014). Fabumi (2013) stated that Information technology makes acquisition of legal materials faster. Due to the impact of information technologies in libraries, librarians in law libraries now place a lot more importance on accessing legal information resources such as databases and electronic resources which allows multiple and simultaneous use, rather than the traditional actual possession in a physical space. The impact of information technologies in the provision of legal information for research in the law library is discussed as follows:

Impact of CD-ROM

The Compact Disc-Read Only Memory (CD-ROM) is a standard information storage device which has the storage capacity of approx 650 M.B. The CD-ROM has been found useful in storing information that does not change over a substantial period of time. CD-ROM combines text, graphics, audio and moving images and these can be accessed using multimedia facilities Kumar (2017). There are lots of legal databases available on CD-ROM which law libraries can acquire without worrying about shelving because CD-ROMs occupy very little shelf space and can be effectively searched using any Boolean expressions. According to Ozor (2017) use of CD-ROMS as an information storage and dissemination tool has actually helped the collection development libraries save cost for the library as CD-ROMS are less expensive and since it can be stored in a system and uploaded and can be shared on a network for multiple readers to read at the same time.

Impact of the Internet

The Internet is a global system of interconnected computer networks that use the standard Internet protocol suite (TCP/IP) to link several billion devices worldwide. It is an international network of networks that consists of millions of private, public, academic, business, and government packet switched networks, linked by a broad array of electronic, wireless, and optical networking technologies. The Internet is a tool that connects millions of computers together, allowing them to communicate with each other (Ashikuzzaman, 2016). The advent of the internet

has turned the world into a global village hence the impact of internet in the library cannot be overestimated (Igun, 2005). With respect to collection development, Librarian can have easy and quick access to the suppliers of books, journals and electronic publications through Internet. Large number of selection tools like Book in Print, Booksellers Catalogues etc. are now available on the Internet. These sources help in the selection of right and latest books for libraries. Internet has made the whole acquisition process much faster, cheaper and easier for libraries. The internet provides access to a wide array of online legal journals and databases that make legal researches fast and easier such as Lexis Nexis, WestLaw, Law Pavilion, Hein Online. Internet provides access to publisher's catalogues and OPACs of large libraries. OPAC is a source of bibliography and cataloguing information. Examples of Nigerian legal websites which presents online legal materials are: International center for Nigerian Law: www.nigerianlaw.org, Nigerian law reports www.nigerianlawreports.com.

Digital libraries

Digital libraries are a managed collection of information, with associated services, where the information is stored in digital formats and accessible over a network (Arms, 2000). According to Ojedokun (2000), a digital library is listed as including electronic databases on the internet, WWW, CD-ROMs and proprietary services. It is a collection of documents – such as magazine articles, book, papers, images, sound files and videos – organized in an electronic form and available on the Internet or on a digital support, for example a CD-ROM disk. Compared to CD-ROM disks. It enables access to databases, electronic journals, alerting services, online reference tools, and selected web resources. This implies that, it will result in providing value – added services and facilitates on-line access to an enormous current volume of information.

The digital library enables the following:

- Expedite the systematic development of procedures to collect, store, and organize, information in digital form.
- Promote efficient delivery of information economically to all users.
- Encourage co-operative efforts in research resource, computing, and communication networks.
- Strengthen communication and collaboration between and among researchers.

- Take leadership role in the generation and dissemination of knowledge

Electronic resources

Electronic resources stand for those electronic information resources that users access electronically via a computing network from inside the library or remote to the library (Shim et al 2001). According to Weitzh (2006), an electronic resource is a material (data and or programme) encoded for manipulation by a computerized device. This material may require the use of a peripheral directly connected to a computerized device (e.g. CD-ROM) or a connection to a computer network (e.g. Internet). The concept of electronic resources consist of texts, audio, visuals, graphics and animations in nature that are accessible through the aid of digital technologies. They refer to those materials that require computer access, whether through a personal computer, or handheld mobile device. They may either be accessed remotely via the Internet or locally. Examples of electronic resources are:

- E-journals
- E-books
- Full-text (aggregated) databases
- Indexing and abstracting databases
- Reference databases (biographies, dictionaries, directories, encyclopaedias, etc.)
- E-images
- E-audio/visual resources.

Collection development of electronic resources requires that the content is evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Support the main research aims and goals of the organization.
- Complement or add depth or breadth to the existing collection.
- Be of a certain quality, e.g., peer reviewed, or have a reputable producer.
- Support the requirements of the/a key audience.
- Generate an acceptable level of use.

Open access

Open access refer to scholarly information and literature that are freely available and accessed online. It has become a consideration in e-resources collection management. Lehman (2014) defines Open access as materials, research or scholarly information, such as a journal article, that is available freely on online for anyone to read, hence interested individuals who might not be able to afford access to research publications can benefit from its availability on the Open access platform. For libraries, because of the burden of journal subscription on library budget Open access has

become very beneficial as useful materials can be inexpensive additions to the library's collections.

Online Public Access Catalogue

The Online Public Access Catalogue represents one of the most important benefits of the application and implementation of ICT in the library. Ajibero in Muritala (2015) stated that OPAC is a detailed holding of a particular library or group of libraries or a database and to which users have direct access. Catalogue information of the Legal holdings of the library is stored and can be access through the online catalogue. This makes searching and location legal information resources for research just a click of a computer or a digital device away. Aside from being an online source of library's catalogue, the OPAC can also be used in preparation of library statics of usage as well as for loans monitoring.

Formulating an electronic collection development policy

Building a collection of information resources in the law library requires an evaluation of the current collection with a focus on the mission and vision of the parent organization which is fundamentally to support all law research activities; this forms the foundation of the collection development policy. Alford, (2000) stated that selection in an electronic era include a balance in subject areas reflecting the needs of the service community, building collections with breadth and depth, promoting cooperative collection building since no single library can cater to the needs of all users, eliminating selector bias while building collections and organising digital information for quick and easy access. The collection development policy covers activities such as selection of electronic resources as well as print putting into perspective identification of vendor, the price, mode of access, licensing and technological compatibility. Other important details in the collection development policy are budgeting, acquisition, weeding and preservation.

Conclusion

Collection development and management can be regarded as the life of the library. It is one of the most vital activities of the library as such the utilization of the library depends on it. In recent times there has been evolving a paradigm shift from the traditional and print driven library collection to

ICT based library collection and services because the library cannot compete with the modern information technology in its traditional collection of print material, although there is still the argument as to the superiority of the print collection to the electronic, the benefits of information and communication technology in the library is enormous. To attract users and improve on service delivery, it is important that the 21st century law library becomes information technology driven through the acquisition of digital and electronic resources and digitization of its processes.

In order to keep up the information explosion in the digital era, it is important that libraries redefine the collection development policies to accommodate digital and electronic resources which are faster to access, breaking the barrier of distance, time and location. The introduction of ICT in the law library has made access to information easier and faster and has also improved the provision of library and information services to support and advance legal research at large. With the advent of ICT in the library comes the need for an orientation and re-orientation of the collection development librarian in order to keep abreast of changing technologies.

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