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NOTE TO CONTRIBUTORS

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A SURVEY OF INFORMATION NEEDS AND USE BY RESEARCHERS AT BENSON IDAHOSA UNIVERSITY, BENIN CITY

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Abstract

This paper work investigated the information needs and use by researchers in Benson Idahosa University. The objectives are to find out Researchers' information needs, the information resources that researchers use, the problems of accessing and utilizing information and to also make recommendations. Based on these, it was recommended tha, libraries and information centers should subscribe to recent journals in different disciplines as they are valuable researcher's information sources, the institutions/ government should pay for or subsidize Internet access charges for researchers. Libraries / information centers should always carryout users Education programmers because some researchers are not aware of the availability of relevant information resources in the libraries.

Keywords: Information needs, Information use, Researchers, Benson University.

I. INTRODUCTION

Right from the time a person wakes up in the morning until he/she goes to bed at night, he/she consciously or unconsciously makes use of information for his/her activities. This shows that an individual does not need to be a researcher to use information. However, as a researcher, a person's level of recognition become higher and can regard information as vital resources like any other resources in the pursuit of his/her livelihood (Yaya and Ebuuwele, 2007).

It is in recognition of this fact that Popoola (2006) observed that the quality of teaching, research and community service in any university system depends on the availability of information. He further stressed that information resources available in institutional information system (library, archives, records offices, documentation centres, and data centers) must be capable of supporting research activities. Adetoro (2004) citing Ogundare (2000) opines that information is essential resource to which individuals in every society should have unimpeded access to. This is because we all need information to play our respective roles in the society and to live meaningful lives.

In this study, the researchers seek to investigate the information need and information utilization by researchers in Benson Idahosa University. The purpose is to find out the type of information need, the type of information used, and the source of information used by researchers in Benson Idahosa University.

II. INFORMATION NEED

Information need has become an important variable in the literature of library and information Science, which attracted attention of researchers and scholars from various field. It is in line with this development that some scholars attempted at placing information in the hierarchy of needs which become fallacious. For instance, Okafor (2003) has contended with the globally acclaimed Maslow's theory of need, and argued that people are too complex to be caged by theories predicting their needs at all the time to be constant without changing. It is rather expected that professionals and researchers should not be pigeonholed according to their perceived need as the context differs.

According to some scholars such as Laloo (2002) it is envisaged that information need is a difficult concept to define, isolate and or measure. Laloo further stressed that in order to understand the concept of information need,

one has to first define the term "need".

Need is what a person ought to have. Also, it can be defined as:

A circumstance under which something is lacking, therefore requiring some course of action.

That which one cannot do without/that which is necessary for an organization's health and well-being.

Information need is what an individual ought to have for his work, his research, his edification, or his recreation. Laloo, (2003) added that information need is an impediment preventing an individual from moving forward in cognitive time and space. A person is often faced with a gap that must be bridged by asking questions, creating ideals and / or obtaining resources.

It is in this respect that Jerome (2007) stressed that academic staff/researchers need information in order to stimulate ideas, update their knowledge and acquire new methods of teaching. Despite this, Odusanya and Amusa (2003) cited Adimorah (1993) stressed that there are some factor which adversely affect the information needs of researchers which include but not limited to:

➢ Lack of adequate resources

➢ Lack of relevant source and resource that can answer their research problems

➢ Lack of financial resources

➢ Lack of search skills etc.

Adetoro (2004) cited Uhegbe (2001) to the effect that user's information needs are absolutely necessary to the management of information centres/libraries. Information becomes useful when it is packaged in the right format, delivered to the right user at the right time. A Librarian is duty bound to seek and bring information together from various sources and in various forms. Access to resources must be facilitated so that the need can be met.

III. INFORMATION UTILISATION

Okiy (2003) Cited Burch and Grudaltski (1986) to the effect that for information to satisfy the requirements of utilization, it must have three attributes:

A)   Accuracy;

b)   Timeliness; and

c)   Relevance.

Accuracy implies that information is free from mistakes, is clear and accurately reflects the data on which it is based.

Timeliness simply means that recipients can get information when they need it, as for relevance it means the information is relevant to the needs of the user and that it answered specifically the users' questions of what, why, who and how? From the above, it is easy to note that if information attained this attributes, then such information can be utilized for the development of individual and the organizations.

Okiy (2003) cited Neelameghan (1981) also stated that information utilization is dependent upon the appropriateness of information that is accessed. Appropriateness of information may be viewed along different dimension as follow:

➢   Appropriateness to the purpose

➢   Appropriateness to user's characteristics

➢   Appropriateness to the medium of information transfer

➢   Appropriateness with respect to quality

➢   Appropriateness with respect to time and availability of information, and

➢   Appropriateness with respect to economic and cost of access and usability

Several scholars and researchers have followed information attributes and appropriateness to study the level of information utilization of different respondents groups. However, the purview of the literature indicated that majority of these studies are carried out in western world, not in the context of developing countries like Nigeria. Though Jerome (2007) has investigated the information needs of science and technology researchers and find out that lack of these attributes and appropriateness of the information available in libraries in Nigerian universities is one of the factors militating against the effective utilization of information.

IV. FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST INFORMATION ACCESS AND UTILIZATION OF RESEARCH

Echezonam (2010), cited Ahiakwo (1998), pointing out that the barriers to information access and utilization include lack of technical

know-how, lack of awareness, lack of adequate telecommunication infrastructure and the poverty level of citizens. Others factors identified by Jerome (2007) include:

- Unavailability of relevant information sources,

- Lack of time and funding problem,

- Lack of awareness about the existence of relevant information that could be useful,

- Most of the resources available are in foreign languages and no translation services in libraries.

From the above review, it is worthy of note that identification of the information needs of different user groups is very important for the successful provision of information services. Lack of information needs of users is posing serious challenges to the provision of resources and services of any given library. It is based on this premise that this study seeks to investigate the information need of researchers at Benson Idahosa University.

V. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Research is one of the most important pillars and live-wire of any University operations. It is in this recognition that libraries are established to support the teaching and research purpose of the university. For libraries to be fully equipped with relevant resources that will satisfy the needs of its users there is the need to identify the information needs and type of information sources and resources they use. Observations have also shown that researchers at Benson Idahosa University are not adequately patronizing the resources of the library. This could be attributed to the fact that the resources of the library are not relevant to need of the researchers. It is against this background that this study seeks to investigate the information need of researchers at Benson Idahosa University, and the type of information resources.

VI. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Find out the information needs of researchers at Benson Idahosa University.

2. Identify the types of information resources that researchers under study use.

3. Identify the problems militating against the researchers in accessing and utilizing information.

4. Make the necessary recommendations to the university authorities.

VII. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the Information needs of Researchers at Benson Idahosa University?

2. What are the Information resources that researchers under study use?

3. What are the problems that militate against researchers in accessing and utilizing information?

VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey research method was used for this study. The population of the study comprises of researchers at Benson Idahosa University. The respondents include the lecturers in the four faculties and postgraduates students in the university. Stratified sampling technique was used to select 50 respondents from four strata, faculties were used as strata. In all a total of 40 lecturers and 10 postgraduate were selected for the study. The questionnaire was the only instrument used to collect data for the study. The researcher uses the secretaries to the Deans of Faculties as an intermediary between the researchers and the respondents.

IX. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

50 copies of the questionnaire were administered through the secretaries to the different Deans of Faculties. Out of this number, 42 copies were returned and found useable, representing 84% of the response rate.

Table 1: Respondent's Distribution by Sex

SEX	NO	%
MALE	30	71.40
FEMALE	12	28.68
TOTAL	42	

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondent based on sex. It shows that 30 (71.4%) of the respondents are male, while 12 (28.6%) are female.

Table 2: Respondent's Distribution on work status

STATUS	NO	%
LECTURER	34	80.9
POST-GRADUATE STUDENT	8	19
TOTAL	42	100

Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents based on work status. It shows that 34 (80.9%) of the respondents are lecturers, while 8 (19%) are postgraduate students that are currently working on their master degree program.

Table 3: Information needs of Researchers

Information Need	Very often Freq	%	Often Freq	%	Sometime Freq	%	Do not Freq	%
Information on general knowledge	12	33.3%	10	26.35	16	42.1	-	-
Information on Current Issues of journals	24	61.5	12	30.7	2	5.1	1	2.7
Information on research work	31	73.8	10	23.8	1	2.3	-	-
Information on government policies	10	25.6	15	38.4	14	35.8	-	-
Others/Please specify	4	66.7					2	33.3
TOTAL								

From table 3 above, shows that majority 97.6% of the respondents stated that they need information on their research work. This followed by 92.2% of the respondents indicating that they need information on From table 3 above, shows that majority 97.6% of the respondents stated that they need information on their research work. This followed by 92.2% of the respondents indicating that they need information on current issues of journals, 66.7% stated that they need information on other areas such as professional journals, official publications, professional colleagues, Newspapers and magazines, information on professional association. The table also shows that 64% of the respondents often need information on government policies, 59.6% stated that they need information on general knowledge and only 16 (42.18) of the respondents emphasized that they sometimes need information on general knowledge. This implies that researchers at the Benson Idahosa University have great deal of information needs which need to be satisfied by the university library.

Table 5: Information Use

Frequency of information use	Never Freq	%	Sometimes Freq	%	Always Freq	%	Often Freq	%	Very Often Freq	%
Information about People, Institution & Companies	1	2.6	15	39.5	6	15.8	10	26.3	6	15.8
Results on Scholarly research	1	2.6	6	15.4	4	10.3	6	15.4	22	56.4
Information for performing your task & responsibilities	-	-	8	19.5	10	24.4	9	22	14	34.1
Information about your field general	1	2.6	1	2.6	6	15.4	9	23.1	22	56.4
Information for lecturing & research	-	-	6	15.8	3	7.9	12	31.6	17	44.7

Table 5 above shows that the respondents indicated that they use information about their

Table 5 above shows that the respondents indicated that they use information for performing their task & responsibilities and information on lecturing and research. This is followed by 97.4% of the respondents who use information on people, institution and companies, while those who use the results on scholarly research and information accounted for 97.5% and 82.1% of the respondents

indicated that they use information about their field in general. This implies that majority of the respondents use information for one reason or the other, but the extent of utilization is not ascertained as majority use the information very often. This could be attributed to the fact that the information resources are not adequately provided or is not inline with their information needs.

Table 6: Types of Information Resources use by the Researchers in Benson Idoha University

S/NO	INFORMATION RESOURCES	PERCENTAGE IN TERMS OF USAGE
1	Internet	85%
2	Textbook	78.1%
3	Research Publication	70%
4	Professional Journals	67.5%
5	Conference Papers	47.4%
6	Dissertation and Thesis	43.6%
7	Colleagues and Friends	40%
8	Reference Sources	35.9%
9	Abstract and Index	32.4%
10	CD Rom Search	28.6%
11	Bulletin and Pamphlets	27%
12	Patents	13.9%

The above table has summarized the types of information resources used by the researchers based on the findings from the study. The Internet has been the most used information resources that the researchers at Benson Idoha University used with the highest frequency of 85%, this followed by text books with 78.1% while the least most use information resources is patent with 13.9%. This implies that the Internet is the most used information resources by the researchers, and the high percentage recorded on the use of the Internet could be as a result of its accessibility, easy to use and the availability and the current resources available on the Internet. While the high percentage of text books could be as result of their availability in the library.

Table 7: Problems militating against access and use of Information by Researchers

Hindering factors to information utilization for research work	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Lack of knowledge on relevant information resources	14	33.3	28	66.7
Unavailability of information resources	20	47.6	22	52.4
Lack of adequate time to go and seek for information	20	47.6	22	52.4
Lack of Relevant information available in the library	2	4.8	40	95.2
Lack of fund to access information resources	20	47.6	22	52.4
Lack of local contents	5	11.9	37	88.1
Lack of ICT facilities	28	66.7	14	33.3

The table above shows that majority (95.2 %) of the respondents indicated that lack of relevant information available in the library is the most militating factor against their use of information. This followed by lack of local contents with 88.1%, while lack knowledge to access relevant information resources with has 66.7% of the respondents. Other hindering factors to effective information utilization are unavailability of relevant information resources, lack of time to seek for information and lack of fund to access information accounted for 52.4% respectively. In addition, the table indicated that the least hindering factor to information utilization according this study is lack of ICT facilities, this means there are so many factors that hinder information utilization by researchers at Benson Idoha University.

VIII. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In conclusion, it is glaring from the findings of the study that researchers at Benson Idoha University have information needs and they use variety of information resources available to them to satisfy their needs. The results of

this small-scale study indicate that researchers need immediate access to high-quality information for their research activities. They need factual material to answer questions that exceed the scope of their routine practice. Therefore, information must be immediately accessible, concise, high quality, and up-to-date to the researchers.

Understanding the researchers information need is important just as an understanding of their information seeking behaviour. Researchers need to be empowered with adequate, relevant and up-to-date information to assist them in their various roles. Researchers agreed that they use information for a variety of purposes and primarily the Internet and books are their major sources of information. Effort must not be spared in providing them with the requisite types, sources, methods and formats that can enhance their information seeking behaviour. This must include both the traditional print media and the newer technologies offered by ICT and the Internet.

To be able to do this, information professionals need to understand the structure of the researchers' information needs. And since their information needs are of diverse nature, their information requirements must be captured in any information programme designed to serve their need. As a result, they must be assisted in the accessibility and use of both formal and informal sources of information. The identified problems must be properly solved to enhance access to information, bearing in mind that this is the essence of striving to understand the researchers' information needs. Libraries and information centres' collections must endeavour to provide adequate information to carter for the variety of information needs that include organizational, professional and personal. This is because the roles which the researchers undertake are of various forms. In so doing, accessibility of information will improve and impact positively on librarians' and information professionals understanding of the structure of the patterns of information needs of researchers.

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