



Methods Employed by Law Students in Accessing Law Information Resources in Federal Universities in North Central Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates and identifies the methods law students use in accessing information resources. A descriptive survey design was adopted in carrying out the study. The population of the study was 3314 law students and sample size of 331 respectively. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to draw the sample. And proportionate stratified random sampling procedure was used to select law students from each university. Accidental sampling technique was used during distribution of the questionnaire whereby any member of the population that was available at the time of distribution of the questionnaire was chosen. The data collected were analyzed using percentage, mean and standard deviation. The results of the study among others showed the methods law students use in accessing information resources; libraries (i.e. law libraries) computer/internet facilities ranked first and second respectively. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made in order to ameliorate the problems: Libraries should educate students in effective ways and methods of searching for information to enhance retrieval among others. Implications of the study were enumerated and suggestions for further research made.

Keywords: Law information resources, Law Students, Information access, Methods

1.1 Introduction

A law student that knows the different methods through which to access the needed information will make the best utilization of the resources. Utilization of information resources by the law students refers to the extent by which the law students use information resources. Improve access to information resources leads to increased use of the resources. Ugwuanyi (1998) identified two principal factors that determine the use of an information resource. These are: Accessibility and Quality. Ossai (2011) found

that most law students used information resources for their academic workload which includes; information to complete assignment and test, "mock" trials, research, among others. They also utilize information resources to satisfy their personal development, health, employment, and global information. According to Ajiboye and Adeyinka (2007) the internet is the most utilized information source by law students followed by lecture notes, handouts and the library.

Law students are satisfied when they access and utilize the actual information resources that meet their information need. Ojokoh (2005) asserts that the availability of information resources can have significant influence on users' satisfaction; the higher the perceived quality of the information resource, the greater the level of user satisfaction. To Anunobi, Uche and Osuchukwu (2013) satisfaction of information needs involves unique information services, which could be in the form of telephone, recreational, advisory services, selective dissemination of information among others.

2.1 Review of Related Literature

Accessibility of library and information resources is the ease of locating and retrieving a piece of information from the storage medium by the user. Accessibility of information sources is a means to an end. It is assumed that if information is accessible to the law students in law libraries, it could be used for their studies. The main goal of the law library is for users to gain access to its abundant wealth of information resources and library services are expected to enhance access to library resources through Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) in relevant research areas, effective reference service, current awareness services / personalized references services, library orientation, document delivery, blog development, email alerts, inter library loans, etc. (Nwagwu and Osiname, 2009).

Law students access legal information through different medium and channels. It could be through information centers, oral sources, commentaries, libraries, others (Olorunfemi, 2015). The methods in which law students access information in law libraries in Nigerian universities include, electronic databases, internet services, computer systems, etc and the application of ICTs in Nigerian law libraries has impacted on

service delivery in areas such as storage, retrieval and dissemination of information resources. A law library is a facility that has been specially created for law users to access and use legal information sources that have being acquired, processed, and organized. This library, as explained by Ajihadun (2010) provides law students with quality information sources and service that enhance accessibility to the resources.

Law libraries make provision for a wide variety of both primary and secondary sources within the law library. This make way for access to sources that include; professional law digest, indexes, abstracts, monographs, legal databases, correspondence, newsletter bulletins, online public access catalogue (OPAC), card catalogue, law reports, law reference materials, statues, acts. These sources are both in print and electronic formats. This allows for access to the sources both by way of a physical visit to the library or via remote access. However, remote access to the e-resources is currently mainly available on campus.

Methods of accessing library resources according to Oluwasemilore (2013) includes; online public access catalogue (OPAC), users' services, bibliographic services current awareness services document delivery, inter-library loans, audio visual services, customer selection services, reserved areas, computer and internet facilities (wireless) , e-mail, telephone, scanning and facsimile services, photocopying services. The introduction of ICTs into the library service environment heralded new near innovative web-based services such as; online information requests, or reference services. Library and information services thus provide law students with a set of technology and library resources to serve the mission of students in general and a way of them accessing information easily (Krubu and Osawaru, 2011). Most law libraries provide computer work stations for law students to

access the library catalogue and other legal sources available in the electronic library. If the law library is connected to the internet, access to the database, can be either free or charge (meaning fees have already been embedded into the students school fees), or students have to purchase airtime to gain access to the internet. A law database is a collection of legal files, law reports, court case, and court judgments together kept together within a computer system that can be accessed online by way of ICT- based electronic devices. According to Akpoghme and Idiegbeyan-Ose (2010), “a law database contains all the laws, cases, indexes, and materials that law students can access at a very high speed without any stress”.

The databases that students access and utilized in Nigerian law libraries are mostly the same as those found in the universal law libraries. These include; Westlaw database, Lexis Nexis, Compulaw database, Legalpedia database, etc. Law students are also provided with access to a number of databases that are not directly related to their field of study, but which might be useful in gaining information on diverse topics to prepare for cases. Databases such as Academic search, African journal online, anthropological index online. These databases might not always be available with the academic law library, but can be accessed from the main university library's database (Olorunfemi, 2015).

Law students also access information through personal information sources. Personal information sources refer to the law students' use of their own materials or resources to search for information. These services include personal computers or laptops, law textbooks, and mobile phones. Law students are likely to use their own information sources if access to law library information sources is denied. This is especially the case with electronic information resources (Olorunfemi, 2015).

Law students also access legal information from court libraries, private law libraries, national and governmental libraries, book stores, newspapers, journals, peers, among others.

Assessing the information and characteristics of users, Olarongbe et al (2013) carried out an assessment of information needs and characteristic of users of Oyo state public library Nigeria. Survey design was used in this study because it was considered appropriate. The area of study covered by the study was the Oyo state public library and the population comprises the registered users of Oyo state library. A sample of 180 (17.6%) respondents was drawn and used for the study. A questionnaire was designed based on the objective of the study. Data was presented and analysed using the descriptive statistics which include, frequency count, percentages and tables. The finding of the study shows that the majority of library users were students and they needed information that supports their education which was sought mainly from their personal text books. The majority of the users obtained their needed information from library and the internet and the major constraint to accessing needed information was inadequacy of relevant materials.

Periodic user's studies and acquisition of current and relevant materials were suggested as possible solutions. This study is related to the present study as it studies information needs of users. It is of immense important as one of the findings states that majority of the users were students and they needed information that supports their education and which were sought mainly from their personal textbooks. And thus, the students in the present study may also constitute the use of public libraries hence they may also need information that will support their educational needs. The study will also help the present research in its design to base on objectives of the study as in the

former. This study will also help and guide the present research in data presentation and analysis using descriptive statistic.

3.1 Research Methodology

The method that is used in carrying out this study is descriptive survey. The population of this study consists of all the law students in University of Abuja, University of Jos, and University of Ilorin. The data was obtained from the list of registered students in 2017 as obtained from the office of academic officers of University of Abuja, University of Jos and University of Ilorin. University of Ilorin has 825 registered law students, University of Jos has 1129, and University of Abuja has 1360 law undergraduate students. The sample size of the study is 331.

A Multi-Stage Sampling technique was used to draw the respondents for the study. First Stage, three Federal Universities were purposively selected namely: University of Abuja, University of Ilorin, and University of Jos. They cut across different states in the North central geographical zone of Nigeria. Also, according to the accreditation status and approved quota of recognized faculties of law

in Nigeria universities from the council of legal education in Nigeria only these federal universities that have been given various status of accreditation in North central.

The number of students used as respondents is 3314. (i.e. University of Ilorin with 825 law students and 10% of the population is 82.5, University of Abuja 1360 and 10% will be 135 and University of Jos with a population of 1129 and 10% sample will be 112. Thus, 331 been the 10% of 3314 law students. The accidental sampling technique was used for the research whereby any member of the population that was not available at the time of the distribution of the questionnaire will not be chosen. In addition, the observation checklist with listed items was used to find out the available information resources in Faculty of Law Libraries of the Universities.

The researcher took a critical observation of the available resources in these libraries using the observation checklist. The data collected was analyzed base on each research question. Frequency was generated, percentages computed and mean calculated. Also tables were used to interpret the findings

4.1 Results

Research Question: What are the methods law students uses in accessing information resources?

Table 1: Mean ratings of respondents on methods law students use in accessing information resources

Methods	Name of Institution						Overall		R	D
	UNIABUJA		UNIL		UNI JOS		Mean	SD		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		HU
1 Computer /Internet facilities	3.49	.68	3.33	.77	3.51	.68	3.43	.72	1 st	HU
2 Monographs	3.28	.77	3.33	.76	3.38	.75	3.33	.76	2 nd	HU
3 Libraries i.e. law libraries	3.23	1.09	3.28	.89	3.45	.50	3.33	.84	3 rd	HU
4 Online databases	3.14	.95	3.40	.80	3.36	.76	3.32	.83	4 th	HU
5 Journals	3.44	.63	3.24	.85	3.20	.82	3.27	.80	5 th	HU

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6	Photocopying services	3.12	1.14	3.25	.92	3.40	.95	3.27	1.00	6	HU
7	Subject directions	3.32	1.07	3.09	1.12	3.41	1.07	3.26	1.09	7 th	HU
8	Selective dissemination of information	3.21	.91	3.27	.93	3.20	.87	3.23	.91	8 th	HU
9	Indexes	3.37	.98	3.02	1.16	3.27	1.14	3.20	1.12	9 th	HU
10	Online journals	3.05	1.15	3.06	1.15	3.16	1.21	3.09	1.17	10 th	HU
11	Book stores	2.81	1.31	2.70	1.32	2.81	1.27	2.77	1.30	11 th	HU
12	Inter-library loan	2.79	1.13	2.53	1.12	2.68	1.11	2.65	1.12	12 th	HU
13	Online public access catalogue (OPAC)	2.56	1.13	2.60	1.26	2.46	1.18	2.54	1.20	13 th	HU
14	Abstracts	2.54	1.10	2.48	1.12	2.46	1.11	2.49	1.11	14 th	FU
15	Social networks	2.47	1.20	2.48	1.12	2.41	1.10	2.46	1.13	15 th	FU
16	Current awareness services	2.38	1.08	2.43	1.14	2.18	1.17	2.33	1.14	16 th	FU
17	Assistance from library staff/ reference services	2.27	1.15	2.23	1.10	2.38	1.12	2.29	1.12	17 th	FU
18	Newspapers	2.24	1.29	2.30	1.21	2.16	2.01	2.24	1.55	18 th	FU
19	Peers, friends, colleagues	2.35	1.11	1.99	1.04	2.13	1.08	2.13	1.08	19 th	FU
20	Manual catalogue	2.04	1.02	2.20	.94	1.97	1.06	2.08	1.00	20 th	FU
	Cluster Mean	2.86	.46	2.81	.49	2.85	.52	2.81	.48		HU

Key: R= Rank, D=Decision, HU = Highly used, FU = Fairly used

Table 1 above shows the mean ratings of the respondents on methods law students use in accessing information resources. Using the principle of real limit of numbers, the results of the data analysis disclose that the methods law students use in accessing information resources are highly as identified in 13 items (Libraries, computers, internet facilities, monographs, Online databases i.e., Lexis-Nexis, photocopying services, subject directories, Monographs, Indexes, Abstracts, Inter-library loan, Computer/Internet facilities, Selective dissemination of information, Libraries i.e. Law libraries, Online journals, Book stores, Photocopying services, and Online public access catalogue). This also indicates that the mean of 3.49 (UNIABUJA), 3.33 UNIL and 3.51 UNIJOS

access information resources through computers/internet facilities. Monographs – 3.45 in UNIJOS. Journals – 3.44 in UNIABUJA, Subject Directories – 3.41 in UNIJOS. Also, the overall mean showed that Computer/Internet Facilities (mean = 3.43) are ranked highest. Manual Catalogue (Mean = 2.08) is ranked lowest as methods law students use in accessing information resources. A cluster mean of 2.86 (UNIABUJA), 2.81 (UNIL), 2.85 with overall mean of 2.81 indicates that students in the universities respectively highly used the methods listed.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

Using the principle of real limit of numbers, the results reveal that items 1-6 in

the questionnaire were used in high extent, the resources includes Libraries, Online databases ,Subject directions, Monographs, Indexes, Abstracts, Inter-library loan, Computer / Internet facilities, Selective dissemination of information , Online journals Book stores Photocopying services and Online public access catalogue (OPAC). This finding therefore reveals that a library was extensively indicated by the respondents. According to Olorunfemi, (2015), the methods in which law students access information in law libraries in Nigerian universities include, electronic databases, internet services, computer systems, etc and the application of ICTs in Nigerian law libraries has impacted on service delivery in areas such as storage, retrieval and dissemination of information resources. A law library is a facility that has been specially created for law users to access and use legal information sources that have being acquired, processed, and organized. This library, as explained by Ajihadun (2010) provides law students with quality information sources and service that enhance accessibility to the resources.

The researcher therefore remarks that; law libraries should make provision for a wide variety of both primary and secondary sources within the law library. This will make way for access to sources that include; professional law digest, indexes, abstracts, monographs, legal databases, correspondence, newsletter bulletins, online public access catalogue (OPAC), card catalogue, law reports, law reference methods, statues, acts, among others and these sources should be both in print and electronic formats. This will enhance access to the sources both by way of a physical visit to the library or via remote access.

On the methods law students use in accessing information resources, law libraries were the **most** used means law students used in accessing information resources and other

12 highly used. This findings corresponds to the findings of Nwagwu and Osiname (2009) who opined that, the main goal of the law library is for users to gain access to its abundant wealth of information resources and library services are expected to enhance access to library resources through Selective Dissemination of information (SDI) in relevant research areas, effective reference service, current awareness services /personalized references services, library orientation, document delivery, blog development, email alerts, inter library loans, etc. Law students access legal information through different medium and channels. It could be through information centers, oral sources, commentaries, libraries, others.

Conclusion

The current information explosion in libraries and information centres requires a proactive approach by librarians in the areas of offering selective dissemination of information, provision of current awareness services and the provision of e-services to their users irrespective of time and space. The implication is that the satisfaction of users encourages the relevance of libraries and hence encourages the growth and development of libraries. Therefore of the methods law students use in accessing, the resources include; libraries, computers, internets facilities, monographs online databases, and others. To a large extent those sources were utilized and to a large extent, they met their needs.

Recommendations

The libraries and library administrators should strategize methods of educating students in effective ways and methods of searching for information to enhance retrieval. Users education and library orientation should be beyond lecture room level and to be done in the library for practical

demonstration of these strategies for easy understanding and for effective library utilization.

The traditional and technological methods of accessing information are observed to be effective. However, effort should be made to ensure its full effectiveness, by ensuring that the information accessing tools are well packaged. The catalogue cards should be effectively file and the shelve guide properly placed to direct users. To adequately access information in the search engines, students should be trained to be computer literate to be able to navigate the websites. Librarians should also be empowered by training and retraining in new ICTs. This will help them acquire the needed skills to tackle the current global changes in information and will be able to teach students on modern information accessing strategies.

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