Challenges and Prospects to Acquisition of Government Publications in Academic Libraries in Nigeria.

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Abstract
This paper reveals the state of government publications in Academic libraries in Nigeria. It highlights and discussed the significant roles of government publications in research, education and the society in general. The problems encountered in the acquisition and classifications of these publications are discussed, which include the National Bibliography of Nigeria, lack of funds, and lack of bibliographic control. Suggestions were offered which might enhance the acquisition, availability and processing of government publication in Academic libraries.

Key words: Academic Libraries, Government Publication and Acquisition.

Libraries are today faced with many challenges in finding necessary information for their various needs and assignments. This is because today new knowledge makes information to be available in different formats. The ability of library to be able to hoist and provide adequate materials for all that may need their services is the only thing that would justify its establishment. All over the world, libraries acquire various materials in order to be able to justify the needs of their clientele.

It strives hard to assuage the intellectual and informational thirst and curiosity of their users by acquiring and processing various reading materials for the use of their patrons in order to justify their continual existence and relevance. The information
sources that will engage our attention in this paper is challenges to acquisition of government publications in Academic libraries in Nigeria.

Onwubuiko and Uzoigwe (2004) sees libraries as social institutions whose responsibility is to collect, preserve, organize and disseminate information materials for the use of all who may be in need of them. That is to say that library collection will be of no use if it is not utilized effectively by those it is meant for. They continued that an academic library should be the type that can enhance effective teaching and learning processes through researches. Therefore, an academic library’s primary function is to disseminate information, which would ensure that the institution is able to fulfill its aim of ensuring that teaching, research and development are achieved. Ononogbo and Akwanwa (2004) also shared the same view, that the Academic library is the most important organ in the university because academic worth, intellectual vitality and effectiveness of any university depends largely on the state of health and excellence of its library, which is its life blood.

Alhidime (2000) argues that the importance of information in human existence could never be over emphasized, any academic institution without good information dissemination apparatus cannot fulfill its aims and objectives. The mission of an academic library can be summed up in a few words, viz acquisition, organization and dissemination of social, scientific and technological information in responses to needs of teaching, research and as support for development.

Abiola (2004) also observes that information is an essential commodity that is required in all spheres of human endeavours, war are won and lost due to availability or non-availability of the right information to close up the communication gap. Nothing is more important for mankind than to bring within his reach all those means of broadening our horizons, escaping from ourselves and making discoveries which literally transform life and make individuals more valuable members of society.

The strategic nature of information Oyebaji (2004) adds is important to know, how and where information is gathered, how information flows through organization and group, who requires particular information, what calculations and procedures are used to process information, how people carry out information and how and where documents and information are stored, for instance government publications.

The terms “government publications” “government documents, or “Official publications” {are often used synonymously because, as the names indicate, they are publications that emanate from government whether at the local, state or federal levels.

Government publication is defined as information materials which is published as an individual document at government expenses or as required by law.

Ogunadana, Olowosejeje & Barkindo, (2002) sees government publication as the fundamental information resources generated by different arms of government including ministries, parastatals and government.
Aina (1981), Katz (1982) and Edoka (2000) agreed that government document are publications that are issued or printed at government body. Such authority of body could be legislative, executive or judicial branches of government. Similarly Odumosu (1990) opines that government publication are vital or authoritative documents issued by/on behalf of government or its agencies. Harrold (1992) adds that government publication has an official, instructional, descriptive, historical nature and is issued by government departments.

Alkintunde, (1995). Says these publications are issued periodically by the local government, state government at all levels of governance. In Nigeria, most government documents are published at the local or state level by the state government printer, and at the federal level by the Federal Government Printer. Every state government has its own government printer located in the state capital, empowered with the publication of government official documents.

They are indispensable materials for research especially in this period when the call for the full democratization of government in Nigeria is becoming more resonant and daring, and scholars are taking more interest in democratic studies, federalism, resource sharing, legislative codes of conduct, codification of laws of federation, politics and government, strategic management, labour unions and press freedom under a democratically elected government. The citizen of any country need to be kept abreast of the government programmes for the nation. That is why Omolayole (2002) says that government publications are a mine of information on the socio-political and economic life of any nation. To be familiar with what the government of particular country publishes is to be aware of the direction the country is taking. Such publications are very useful in the study of internal and international relations and bilateral cooperation between nations because they contain first-hand information.

**Importance of Government Publications**

Government publications help the government to propagate, publicize, and advertise its activities and achievements with a view to canvassing for the votes and approval of the people during electioneering campaigns. Such government documents provide the people the opportunity to compare different types of people in government and their leadership and management style. The people can therefore decide the type of government they want to have in place. Such evaluation of government activities will determine the longevity of these governments. A government, irrespective of level, that does well will attract the people’s approbation. When the government falters, it attracts disapprobation and protest. That government may eventually be terminated because the people have lost confidence in it.

One of the ways by which government promotes stability, peace, and tranquility in the nation is by publishing and publicizing its policies made by government or
purportedly activated by government which will need some clarification or explanation or else the public might resort to violent protest, acrimony, upheaval, arson, other forms of aberrant manifestations owing to misinformation or lack of information.

Challenges of Government Publication

**Depository:** There is a law which makes it mandatory that for every government publication published by government printer, a specific number of copies of such publications be deposited to designated libraries. According to Weech (1981), inaccessibility to the knowledge of what is published and who does the publishing would make it difficult to develop collections of state publication.

Another factor that is hindering the acquisition and development of government publications in Academic libraries is lack of bibliographic control of official publications. The National Library Act Number 56 of 2010 empowers the National Library of Nigeria to be the complier and repository of the National Bibliography of Nigeria. The National Bibliography was becoming a quinquennial publication until 1991 when both the 1987 and 1988 cumulative lists were published within a short interval. The National Bibliography of Nigeria, like the British Books in print, is very important for acquisition purpose. It helps the acquisition librarian to have necessary bibliographic information about what to acquire and can therefore make his selections. In a situation where a necessary bibliographic tool like the National Bibliography is rarely published, the acquisition of government publications will be greatly hampered.

Again, there are varieties of classification schemes used in the processing of government publication in academic libraries. This diversity of classification scheme creates classification and retrieval problem for both librarians and the users of the library. The present classification scheme used by the national library of Congress and the university of Jos Library, Nigeria, for example uses the adapted version of the national Library of Nigeria’s classification scheme. While the Federal University Libraries use the Library of congress classification system this problem of classification rules and other related problems have been identified by Asamoah-Hassan (2000) as some of the challenges facing the growth of government publications in Libraries.

Another reason why government documents are not available to the users is because some Government Printers have been privatized, and so their publications are now for sale. Most libraries expect these publications to be given to them free of charge, as that was the usual practice. State-owned university libraries, for instance, cannot understand why they should pay for what is produced by the governments that fund the universities they established According to Ifedon (1998) Materials like gazettes, decrees, edicts are likely to be missing forever by the library if they are not picked up as soon as they are issued. The inaccessibility of government publication is also attributable to the political instability in Nigeria. There has been frequent military intervention in the
politics of Nigeria, for instance no continuity in government as each government that emerges set up its own agenda, while it makes every effort to discredit its predecessor’s achievements. Most governments have no time for publishing government documents as they spend their time to perpetuate themselves in power. The only thing they have time for is to roll out strategies to use government publications as propaganda to attack and assault the sensibilities of their political opponents and at the same time canvass for more votes from the people in the next political dispensation. Whenever these materials are issued, libraries are not usually their targets but the politicians. That is why Akinyotu (1988), Opines that where the government documents are housed and published outside government printer constitute a problem as the knowledge of what is published and who does the publishing would make it difficult to develop collections of academic libraries.

Apparently, most state government, including the federal governments complain loudly for lack of finance, workers salaries are paid in arrears, allowances are hardly paid, no more capital projects, accusations of gross embezzlement of funds and financial impropriety leveled against the leaders owing to economic recession and mismanagement of funds, these publications are hardly issued and when they are issued, they are stingily done. This constitutes a major factor why university libraries cannot meet the needs of their users in government publication.

Prospects

In order to overcome the challenges and problems confronting the acquisition of government publications in Academic libraries, a number of stern measures must be taken to forestall further degeneration of the debilitating situation. It is high time that succeeding governments in Nigeria began to perceive government publications as indispensable and essential materials for educational research that must be available in Academic libraries. This new reorientation and perception by government will make it allocate more funds in its annual budgetary allocation to the information sector or government press that is responsible for the production and distribution of government publications. It will also cause the government and it agencies to supervise the management of human and material resources of the government publication. Also, the current legal Deposit Act No 56 of 2010 should be reviewed. The government should enact a law that will make all University Libraries depositories and repositories of all government publications which should specify that at least four copies of government publications should be sent to these depository libraries as soon as they are published. This method will boost the collections of many libraries. Besides, it will stop the illegal business of book jobbers who specialized in selling expensive photocopies of carefully bound volumes of government publications to university libraries. The national Bibliography of Nigeria should be reactivated so that it can be publishing more regularly and be made available for acquisition by libraries. The Government Printer should
imitate the HMSO in Great Britain and produce the Annual Catalogues of Nigerian Publication and consolidated indexes every five years. According to Smith (1978) the HMSO in great Britain produces the daily list of new publications, list of Non-Parliamentary publications and catalogue Amendment lists of retrospective publications, and many other subject bibliographies which are very useful for libraries, library users and booksellers. The government printer in Nigeria should be alive to these responsibilities and make the production of government publications adequate for bibliographic services.

Finally, the Academic libraries in Nigeria, under the auspice of the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) and the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULCU) has to streamline the existing classification schemes for classifying government publication so that there can be uniformity. Consequently, information can thereby be retrieved without any difficulty. The view has been reinforced by Pemberton (1978) when he remarks that an information system is required to develop a system that will enable materials in libraries to be processed in such a way that it can be retrieved easily. Such an arrangement will promote cooperation among Academic libraries, instead of leaving each library to develop its own classification scheme.

Conclusion

Government publications are primary sources of information. They reveal government’s philosophy and ideologies, and propagate the activities of government and its agencies. The information generated through these documents can hardly be found through any other information source other than government publications. These publications are indispensable sources of information for educational, economic and socio-political purposes. It is believed that if government takes adequate measures as stated above, citizens will be good followers and information dissemination will be at the door step of every citizen.

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