

Management of Government Publications for Successful Use in University Libraries

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ABSTRACT

Government publications is of serious importance in research literature among certain disciplines such as social science, science, art, humanities and technology because it contains invaluable information that most times borders on activities of government and politics of the land, regulation of activities of organizations, public policy statements, statistical evidences, and activities of institutional and professional associations. The need to acquire, organize, preserve and disseminate information that abounds in government publications of numerous types cannot be overemphasized. This study took a deep dive into the general management of government publications for effective utilization in university libraries. It is important for the library to be in possession of a comprehensive list of most, if not all government publications, and ensure that it is constantly being supplied by the government. The government of the day should embrace technology and get involved in e-government publications and distributions and should ensure digitalization of its publications for ready and easy consultation. Worthy of mention among the problems militating against acquisition of government publications is the method of acquisition where most libraries rely on donation, gifts and deposits which hardly ensure the collection of dependable, consistent and primary government publications in relation to the needs of the library users. This study has made some valuable recommendations which if implemented would possibly address some of the problems and ensure effective acquisition and provision of government publications.

Keywords: Management, Government Publications, Research University Library

Introduction

Libraries fundamentally developed from the need to collect and assemble writings for preservation and posterity. It serves as a collection of records of human civilization in many forms and languages that have been saved, arranged, and

interpreted to satisfy the wide range of informational, educational, recreational, and aesthetic needs of people. Ikegune (2016) asserts that a library is a collection of the knowledge that great thinkers both past and present have contributed. It is a social organization tasked with the duty of disseminating information to the public without bias. The collections held by libraries represent the heritage of humanity

since they retain knowledge, concepts, ideas, works of art, and other indications of human achievement in a variety of fields and eras. Libraries can be generically classified as school libraries, special libraries, public libraries, national libraries and University libraries depending on who they are meant for.

University libraries are those found at post-secondary institutions known as universities. To meet the information, research, and instructional demands of its students, professors, and staff, a university must build, manage, and fund a library or library system. According to Afolabi (2014), a university's library is an essential component that serves as a resource for students, faculty, staff, researchers, and other community members who need information. The university library system was designed to work toward realizing the goals and ideals of the institution. Since the university library performs as an essential component of the university, its expansion and advancement are entirely reliant upon the expansion and advancement of the educational and research initiatives of the university. A university library's primary role is to assist a parent institution in achieving its goals by acting as an auxiliary. Additionally, the library serves as a vital intellectual resource for academic communities and aids in curriculum fulfillment as well as the advancement of studies and research (Afolabi 2014).

The libraries must house and manage a variety of information resources, including reference materials, periodicals, media resources, trade literature, fiction, nonfiction, and government publications, so that knowledge, information resources, and other works of imagination are made accessible and used by all university communities, regardless of their social, economic, political, or academic affiliations. Governmental papers are excellent resources that are made available as distinct papers at government expense or in compliance with legislative obligations. (Ani, 2017) Okwor, Mole, and Ihekwoaba (2015) define government papers

as any educational materials created by any legislative body, executive or judicial department, ministry, bureau, agency, independent office, court, commission, or office of any government. Government publications are important sources of information that display a government's beliefs and ideology and support the activities of the government and its agencies. Rarely can you find the information created by these documents anywhere else than official publications. For educational, economic, and socio-political goals, these publications are essential information sources.

Publications from the government often offer very important information about the law, education, agriculture, economy, health, and environment. They are essential because they provide the bulk of the information used in planning and government operations. However, government publications can come in a variety of media, including printed materials like books, pamphlets, and leaflets as well as non-printed materials like CDs and electronic formats (Olumuyiwa and Osagie, 2011). It is possible to acquire, control, and access government publications with the help of effective management. Management includes all responsibilities and activities related to the founding of an enterprise, its financing, the formulation of all major policies, the provision of all necessary tools, the defining of the general organizational structure under which the enterprise is to operate, and the choice of the key officers. Libraries and management are practices seen in all spheres of human activity. Because of this, academic libraries, like other libraries, carry out important tasks related to resource management that result in the efficient use of information sources like official publications.

Management of Government Publications

Management of government publications in the context of library entails planning, organizing, leading, directing and

coordinating all activities involving but not limited to usage and acquisition of every library collection or material especially that of the government in line with the library's clientele and also, the preservation and maintenance of library documents especially that published by the government or its subsidiaries. When designing and implementing library and information services, information workers must have specialized knowledge and the ability to apply it (Gwang, 2011). The implication is that the librarian should be familiar with how people find, acquire, process, use, and retain information as well as how society and groups within it originate, produce, organize, disseminate, diffuse, conserve, and discard knowledge.

Libraries can employ the following ways in managing government documents

1. **Cataloging and Classification:** using a standardized system to categories government publications creating an organized physical collection with clear labeling and shelving for easy access.
2. **Electronic and physical access:** Government documents should be made available both in physical and electronic format and should be easily accessible.
3. **Collaboration with government agencies:** They should collaborate with government agencies to ensure continues supply of government publications.
4. **Digitization:** for preservation and easy access, all library collections especially government documents/publications should be digitized. This will make it easy for people to access library collections.
5. **Preservation and storage:** Due to usage and poor storage methods, papers and books deteriorate over time.

Government publications need to be properly preserved, just as other library resources. Information-rich items should be preserved to avoid deterioration and to increase their usefulness in libraries. However, librarians have made an effort to protect library items against hazards like theft, vandalism, insects, fungi, fire, water, and so forth. The value of keeping government records for reference purposes cannot be overstated. Air cooling, shelving, fumigation, off-site storage, binding, microfilming, and ICT are some of the preservation techniques used for library items. (Alhassan & Abdulsalam, 2013).

6. **Access Policy:** Establishing a clear guideline for accessing government documents especially if some are classified or restricted.
7. **Legal and copyright consideration:** Ensuring that all government publications are management within the stipulated copyright laws.

Effective Utilization of Government Publications

Utilization of government publication refers to the effective and efficient use of library resources that have been discovered and obtained by a user with the intention of resolving an issue or reaching a certain objective. For effective teaching, learning, and research that satisfies their information needs and enables them to make major decisions, library users visit the library in quest of adequate, significant, and current information in print and non-print media. The library is stocked to the gills with a wide variety of recorded information resources, including books, magazines, reference books, manuscripts, periodicals, government publications, etc (Hussaini, Vashistha & Jimah, 2018). Aladeniyi and Owokole (2018) opined that a library can only be regarded as the hub of all academic

activities where there are adequate library resources that are well utilized. The worth and impact of a library can be felt through the utilization of the various resources acquired by the library. Effective utilization of the library information resources will no doubt add value to the functions of the library in any society.

Challenges of Government Publication in Nigeria

Despite the inherent advantages of government publications, these materials are underutilized and inadequately dispersed, particularly in Nigeria. This is because managing government publications to ensure optimal usage is difficult. One of these issues, according to Ajidahun (2006), is the physical accessibility of government papers. In other words, these official documents are not available for libraries to purchase since they were not generated properly. Because of this, the majority of university libraries' government document collections are sparse, out-of-date, underfunded, and tainted by political unpredictability and governmental inconsistency.

It is crucial to note that the national information infrastructure in Nigeria is woefully inadequate for the efficient creation, organization, and transmission of information by the Nigerian government. Therefore, information may still be unavailable for reasons that are not lawful, even though Freedom of Information rules have been passed. In actuality, institutional and procedural safeguards to guarantee that Nigeria's Freedom of Information legislation will be successfully implemented to encourage the open flow of government information remain insufficient. In fact, it should be noted that neither the creation of the country's freedom of information legislation nor the implementation of mechanisms for public access have involved information institutions (such as libraries, archival institutions, documentation centers, research centers, and universities) or

information professionals in Nigeria (Batiste, 2008).

The unavailability of appropriate materials was buttressed more by Ezema and Okafor (2010) who are of the opinion that Acquisition of government document in University of Nigeria library seems not to follow any defined pattern. This is because according the document librarian, greater percentage of the acquisitions are through gift and donations. The implication is that the library may not acquire materials in core areas that are of interest to the users as lots of the materials acquired are mainly from Federal Government ministries and parastatals and other government agencies who donate their publications unsolicited and free of charge and may at times be of little or no use to the library users.

Lack of bibliographic control over official publications, according to Ani (2017), is a further barrier to the expansion of government publications in academic libraries. The National Library of Nigeria is given authority to compile and store the National Bibliography of Nigeria under the National Library Act Number 56 of 2010. The National Bibliography was on the verge of becoming a yearly publication until 1991, when the 1987 and 1988 cumulative lists were both released quickly. Similar to printed British books, the Nigerian National Bibliography is crucial for acquisition purposes. The acquisition librarian benefits from having the required bibliographic data so he can make decisions about what to buy. In a scenario when a crucial reference resource like the National Bibliography is rarely published, the acquisition of government publications will be greatly hampered.

Once more, different categorization systems are employed in academic libraries to process government publications. For both librarians and library users, the variety of categorization schemes causes problems with classification and retrieval. For instance, the National Library of Congress and the

University of Jos Library in Nigeria employ an adaptation of the National Library of Nigeria's categorization system in their current classification systems. The Library of Congress categorization system is used by the Federal University Libraries. The difficulty with categorization regulations and other similar issues has been mentioned as one of the difficulties with the expansion of government publications in libraries. Government book purchases will be severely constrained because the National Bibliography is seldom printed.

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Prospects of Government Publication in Nigeria

A variety of stringent steps must be adopted to prevent future deterioration of the crippling situation in order to solve the difficulties and problems associated with the acquisition, growth, development, and administration of government publications in Nigerian University libraries. It is past time for Nigeria's future administrations to start viewing government publications as necessary and crucial research and instructional resources that must be made available in university libraries. The government will provide more money in its yearly financial allotment to the information sector or government press, which is in charge of producing and disseminating

official publications, as a result of its new reorientation and perspective. Additionally, it will force the government and its institutions to monitor the administration of human and material resources in government press.

Under the supervision of the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) and the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULCU), academic libraries in Nigeria must standardize the categorization of government publications by streamlining the current classification schemes. As a result, information may be easily acquired using the human and material resources of the Government Press (Ani, 2017). Academic libraries in Nigeria are required to standardize the categorization of official publications by simplifying the existing classification systems, under the direction of the Nigeria Library Association (NLA) and the Committee of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (CULCU). As a consequence, information may be quickly accessed (Ani, 2017). Okwor Ihekwoaba and Agunwamba (2019) is of the opinion that A thorough listing of government document resources, training librarians in government document management, timely delivery of government documents to libraries, well-organized bibliographic control, and adequate parking space are just a few of the strategies that should be used to improve the acquisition of government documents. The government should also be active in e-government publishing, government records should be distributed widely, university libraries should have adequate funding, and government publications should have better internet access, among other things. The purchase and use of government publications in libraries will be improved by the proper implementation of the aforementioned tactics. Alhassan and Abdulsalam (2013) proposed a higher amount of funding that will enable and motivate the government document librarians it is the responsibility of the government document unit to search for publications coming from government offices, departments, and other divisions.

The National Library of Nigeria should occasionally run sponsored radio and television commercials to encourage the various government ministries, offices, and agencies to voluntarily contribute their publications.

Conclusion

Government publications is of serious importance in research literature among certain disciplines such as social science, science, art, humanities and technology because it contains invaluable information that most times borders on activities of government and politics of the land, regulation of activities of organizations, public policy statements, statistical evidences, and activities of institutional and professional associations. The need to acquire, organize, preserve and disseminate information that abounds in government publications of numerous types cannot be overemphasized. This study took a deep dive into the general management of government publications for effective utilization in university libraries. It is important for the library to be in possession of a comprehensive list of most, if not all government publications, and ensure that it is constantly being supplied by the government. The government of the day should embrace technology and get involved in e-government publications and distributions and should ensure digitalization of its publications for ready and easy consultation. Worthy of mention among the problems militating against acquisition of government publications is the method of acquisition where most libraries rely on donation, gifts and deposits which hardly ensure the collection of dependable, consistent and primary government publications in relation to the needs of the library users. This study has made some valuable recommendations which if implemented would possibly address some of the problems and ensure effective acquisition and provision of government publications.

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