NEW APPROACH TO INFORMATION SERVICES DELIVERY IN THE NIGERIAN NATIONAL PETROLEUM CORPORATION (NNPC) LIBRARIES

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Abstract

The paper discusses new approaches to information service delivery in organizations with particular reference to the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. Emphasizing the need for corporate librarians to be more proactive and involved in all the corporate programmes right from the beginning, the paper calls for periodical assessment of corporate information needs with the view to discovering the changing corporation's explicit and tacit knowledge. Proposing restructuring of the Corporate headquarter library to accommodate two new essential divisions and using emerging Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), such as internet, GSM, blogging/RSS feeds, etc., the paper shows how different strategies could be employed to deploy information services to the entire corporate workforce.

Keywords: Information Dissemination, Information Service Delivery, Special libraries, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation

1.0 Introduction

Information is vitally important to the successful functioning of any organization. The absence of it in an organization can be taken to mean many things that are not intended. Information is required to make decisions and convey decisions taken to the people responsible for implementation, and for monitoring the actual results achieved as the work progresses. Organizations need to decide regularly on what objectives to be achieved, what actions to take to achieve these objectives, how and when these actions are to be taken, and the resources to be used for all these activities. These decisions are taken by all the people in the organization who work at different level of organizational hierarchy and handle different aspect of the organizational work. In this way information plays critical role in working of every organization. Information is considered as the number one raw material used not only in the production and marketing processes but also in producing each and every decision taken in an organization.

It is interesting to note that organizations have since recognized the importance and roles Information play in their growth and development because in this competitive World organizations excel not necessary because of the amount of raw materials, size and assets they have but because of their ability to sources, utilize and convert information into knowledge and effectively use the knowledge to make wise and intelligent decisions. As noted by Burnett (2000) information has become organizations most important assets, alongside its staff and finance and

organization's information value chain is where data is transformed into information, then knowledge, and finally wisdom or intelligence, which must be managed effectively.

Established on April 1, 1977 as the Nation's oil corporation, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) was in addition to its exploration activities given powers and operational interests in refining, petrochemicals and products transportation as well as marketing. The Corporate was commercialized into 12 Strategic Business Units (SBUs), covering the entire spectrum of oil industry operations: exploration and production, gas development, refining, distribution, petrochemicals, engineering, and commercial investments. Currently, the subsidiary companies include:

- Nigerian Petroleum Development Company (NPDC)
- The Nigerian Gas Company (NGC)
- The Products and Pipelines Marketing Company (PPMC)
- Integrated Data Services Limited (IDSL)
- National Engineering and Technical Company Limited (NETCO)
- Hydrocarbon Services Nigeria Limited (HYSON)
- Warri Refinery and Petrochemical Co. Limited (WRPC)
- Kaduna Refinery and Petrochemical Co. Limited (KRPC)
- Port Harcourt Refining Co. Limited (PHRC)
- NNPC Retail
- Duke Oil

In addition to these subsidiaries, the industry is also regulated by the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR), a department within the Ministry of Petroleum Resources. The DPR ensures compliance with industry regulations; processes applications for licenses, leases and permits, establishes and enforces environmental regulations. The DPR, and NAPIMS, play very crucial role in the day to day activities throughout the industry.

Realizing the importance of information to its corporate existence, the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) established libraries in virtually all its 12 Strategic Business Units (SBUs) and other subsidiaries, with a main library located at the corporate headquarters at Abuja. These libraries are regarded as 'specialized information systems' which provide focused services to the entire corporation. These libraries are distinguished by their focused collection and services for the proper dissemination of information. The libraries help to acquire, organize and disseminate

information in line with the vision and mission of the corporation. The libraries provide information that support decision-making in areas relating to finance, administration, marketing, technical specialization and other key areas. Below is a list of some of the corporate libraries:

- The Corporate Library and Archives, Abuja
- CPSK Library, Kaduna
- GLD Library, Mosimi
- IDSL Library,
- KRPC Library, Kaduna
- NAPIMS Library,
- NGC Library,
- NLNG Library,
- PH Zonal Office Library,
- PHRC Library,
- R&D Library,
- Staff School Library, Kaduna
- Staff School Library, P/Harcourt
- Warri Zonal Office Library,
- WRPC Library,

However, while the volume, complexity and criticality of information in just about every organization – public and private sector – are ballooning, there seems to be growing complaint from librarians of all types on the very low usage of libraries by information users. The low usage of these libraries is further worsen by the advent of Internet and the believe by many clienteles that they can get whatever information they need from the internet. Therefore, this situation presents difficult times for all libraries, especially corporate libraries. Thus, to attract back information users to the libraries and ensure full utilization of information resources and services therein, corporate librarians must take strategic look at their organization with the view to identifying, capturing, organizing and disseminating organizational knowledge. According to Henczel (2007), identifying the information that is critical to the responsibilities and activities that are carried out by employees in the corporate organization and ensuring that such information are provided in a way that complements existing workflow and information use practices—can lead to information needs satisfaction. And as noted by Choo (1996) without an understanding of how the enterprise creates, transforms and uses its information, that enterprise has no ability to manage and sustain its information management processes, information resources, or information technology. Hence librarians in general and corporate librarians in particular must be able to redesign the process they acquire, manage and deploy information required by the work force so as to support the processes of making critical decisions all day and every day. To do this effectively Information managers seeking to achieve excellence in information delivery according to Yusuf (2000) must appreciate

relevant management concepts which will provide a perfect framework for realizing the goals of information delivery services. This requires commitment, i.e. putting knowledge to work, or in other words, linking the information user with the right information resources at the right time.

It is in view of the above that this paper set out to highlight and discuss some new approaches to information service delivery. It is believed that through well planned Information services delivery, the Information Manager can reach the entire corporate organization—rapidly and ensure maximum utilization of information by both individuals and the corporate body. The paper specifically underscores the need for the corporate librarians to come to term with the fact that unlike their colleague in other libraries, they are the users of their libraries. It is also important for them to realize that the bulk of the corporate library information resources are generated internally and these are the resources that would later be sort to support various decisions. Therefore, there is the need to periodically conduct information needs assessment in order to identify, capture, document and deploy, using various Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) the internally generated information that are regarded as the explicit and tacit organizational knowledge.

2.0 The Corporate Librarians as Active Library Users

It is important to remind corporate librarians that as against other type of libraries, they are the sole users of their libraries. Personnel working in the corporation are always too engaged in carrying out their tasks that they do not have much time to visit the library and when they come they just want to get the information as quickly as possible. By using their libraries, i.e. knowing where specific information is stored and possessing the ability to access quickly, analyze and disseminate, corporate librarians have the opportunity to play a variety of interesting roles, including providing proactive information, such as background information and research on company products and competitive intelligence information. To create the desired impact, corporate librarians also have to own skills, think creatively and innovatively, negotiate confidently and persuasively, as well as seeking new or 'reinventing' opportunities

3.0 Corporate Information need assessment

Needs assessment is a part of planning processes, often used for improvement in individuals, education/training, organizations, or communities. As a systematic process for determining and addressing "gaps" between current conditions and desired conditions or "wants", needs assessment can refine and improve a product such as training or service a client receives. It can be an effective tool to clarify problems and identify appropriate interventions or solutions. By clearly identifying the problem, finite resources can be directed towards developing and implementing a feasible and applicable solution. However, as pointed out by Kaufman, *et al* (1993) needs assessments are only effective when they are ends-focused and provide concrete evidence that can be used to determine which of the possible means-to-the-ends are most effective and efficient for achieving the desired results. Therefore, it is important that corporate librarians, as Choo (1996) notes, not only conduct information needs assessment of their corporations periodically but as pointed out by Choo, (2000) must also become involved early in programs to better understand the problems and context clarify goals and help identify alternatives because that information is used strategically in an enterprise for sense-making in the environment, as a point of generation of new knowledge for product, service, or process innovation, and as the foundation for ongoing decision-making throughout the workforce.

It is also very essential for corporate librarians to know as revealed by Brown and Duguid (1998) and Nonaka and Konno (1998) that the understanding that enterprises themselves generate and own knowledge is relatively new and even newer is the focus on the overt and proactive management of that knowledge. Organizations generate two types of knowledge; explicit and tacit, and throughout knowledge management (KM) literature, Anand *et al*., (1998), Choo, (2000), Nonaka and Konno (1998) and Stover (2003) observe that the distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge has been discussed extensively.

Explicit knowledge is described as the know-what of the organization, which are the products that organization produce, and are often described as the organizations' intellectual assets or intellectual property. Explicit knowledge as codified intellectual assets is valuable to the organization because they add to the organization's observable and tradable stocks of knowledge. On the other hand, tacit knowledge within an organization is described as the

personal knowledge that individuals have about their job, their leadership, their environment and organizational culture. The knowledge has to do with how individuals in the workforce learn processes, gain skills, and understand their place in the organization, what is termed "how we do it". Tacit knowledge grows over time and largely through interactions with co-workers and others in the workplace environment and increases through doing and experiencing, which is most often highly specific to the environment and circumstances at hand. Thus, tacit knowledge is the foundation of an enterprise's core competencies and according to North *et al* (2004) estimated at over 75% of any enterprise's information cache. This is why Choo (1996) averred that because of the demonstrated value of sharing tacit knowledge, enterprises are embarking on proactive methods to encourage information exchange – through after action reviews, procedural lessons learned discussions, and even storytelling. The most potentially valuable activity for leveraging tacit knowledge that enterprises are tackling today, however, is the establishment of the community of practice (COP) model.

The corporate librarians' tacit knowledge and skill sets are used today to manage a subset of the organization's explicit knowledge. Librarians may perform the role of infomediator with corporate experts to conduct value audits, identify new collection requirements, and improve access and retrieval. Immersion in strategic Information Management and communities of practice will offer librarians an opportunity to expand their organizational role and deliver enhanced value to the enterprise. In addition, corporate librarians should be able to also tacitly be in-tune with the corporate culture, its leadership and vision because as opined by Chun (2000) most of the time, the skills and competencies of the workforce, the know-how are transparent to the organization or hidden beneath the surface of day-to-day work". Hence, strategic information management acknowledges the need to understand and combine explicit data, information and tacit knowledge – each a point of leverage for the corporation

Therefore to exploit explicit and tacit knowledge fully and combine the two to maximize information service delivery, the corporate librarians need to:

- Identify, acquire, capture information generated by departments, units, committees, etc. of the corporation

- Document, refine, and edit knowledge so that local knowledge takes on relevance and significance beyond its genesis
- Collaborate with organizational work teams and profiling their clients' information needs

To perform the above duties efficiently, the corporate librarians should appoint library ambassadors to various departments of the corporation; they could also be assigned to cover particular committees, especially statutory, tasks and activities. With this the corporate librarians should be able to capture, document and share knowledge generated from the departments and other places. In addition to this the corporate librarians should also be able to leverage information for maximum effectiveness throughout the organization and monitor its use, as well as forecasting future needs in order to create emergent knowledge from which new products and services can be derived

4.0 Review of Information Resource Development Policy (IRDP) in Corporate Libraries

Today, the reliance of organizations on their explicit and tacit knowledge for decisions making calls for review of the types of information resources acquired by corporate libraries. Perhaps one of the reasons why corporate staffs do not patronize the libraries could be because bulk of the information resources is not relevant. It is implied that since tacit knowledge is the foundation of organizations' core competencies and is estimated at 75%, information resources in corporate libraries should majorly cover this type of resources. Effort should be made to acquire information resources that are critical to the responsibilities, activities and decisions taken by the corporation

5.0 Restructuring of Corporate Headquarters Library

In order to provide effective and efficient information services, there is the need to restructure and reposition the Corporate headquarters Library. Appendix A attached gives the new structure in which two new divisions are added to the corporate library. The Branch libraries division is to oversee the activities of all branch libraries and departments within the Corporation. Equally important is the need to create Corporate Institutional Repository Center (CIRC) where all important documents and information about the corporation and its subsidiaries will be digitalized, process, managed and disseminated

6.0 Planning Information Services

Library and information service is the bedrock of all type of libraries, particularly special libraries that are concern with enhancing corporate performance. Some scholars argued that effective library and information services can be provided even with few information resources. Rogers (1979) defined library and information services as a term that is used to describe a single event, a series of events inside the library or held elsewhere under library sponsorship. It is also seen as the total package of services available to the corporate body and its staff through all of its service points in the library – reference services, information and referral services, A/V services, and others.

The most common service that libraries have been offering over the years is the access to document collections. However, the expectations of both the constituencies from the libraries go far beyond the accessibility to internal collections. They need bibliographic information, condensed information, analytical information, repackaged information, and consolidated information and such other content-oriented information for understanding latest developments in the field, state-of-the-art in activities and procedures relevant to the organization, and complete overview of the organization's mandate.

Broadly, corporate libraries should offer different types of library and information services that would be of relevance to both the users and constituencies. These services include

- Current Awareness Services
- Selective Dissemination of Information
- Provision of everyday Use Information
- Catching up information services
- Provision of exhaustive Information.

Therefore in planning and organizing the above mentioned information services, the corporate libraries need to browse published and grey literature and compile relevant information from databases that would support the production of organization's products. The libraries could also use in-house databases as well as external bibliographic and full-text databases for organizing information dissemination services.

7.0 Information Services Delivery in Corporate Organizations

Information service delivery means supplying information in either original or as copies of the original (in print or digital format). Information service delivery to end users implies five types of operations:

- document identification,
- document location, = Information identification
- document retrieval, = Information retrieval
- document analysis, and = Information analysis, and
- document delivery = Information delivery

Information Services can be delivered to end users through the following ways:

- creation, maintenance and managing Corporate Institutional Repository Center (CIRC)
- organizing corporate knowledge for awareness, access, retrieval and use.
- creation and evolution of a unifying classification method for breadth and scope resource access
- provision of technical instruction related to search, retrieval and information quality evaluations
- creation of external content (book reviews; news clippings related to partner, competitor, supplier, and customer knowledge) and internal content (past programs' and contracts' information, silo repositories' holdings, reference materials); and,
- as noted by Prusak and Matarazzo (1995) creating awareness of the connection of individuals across the enterprise to one another based upon their interest and contributions to studies, initiatives, and programs.
- Packaging, publishing and distributing the corporate knowledge via the organization's portal, pre-identified information flow models, such as blogging, RSS feeds, and other social media networks.
- Embarking on evangelical outreach and advocacy

Subsequently, with the emergence of digital era and advent of ICTs, the corporate libraries can share their resources by transmitting digital images of the print documents or sending electronic files of digital documents over the Internet. Using these information

technologies the end-user gets copies of the documents such as photocopies/ electronic images/ fax images/ electronic files for permanent retention.

5.0 Conclusion

The paper concludes that in order to ensure high utilization of corporate libraries by management and the workforce, corporate librarians should periodically conduct information needs assessment and review of their information resource development policy. Knowing what information management and the workforce need to execute the day-to-day activities and decisions will put the corporate libraries at vantage position to plan and deploy various information services using emerging Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to the entire workforce of the corporation.

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