

**AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN SHARI'AH COURT
LIBRARIES IN THE NORTHERN STATES OF NIGERIA**

BY

ABUBAKAR ALIYU

Centre for Islamic Legal Studies Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria

ABSTRACT

*This study is based on investigation into the availability and utilization of information resources and services among the staff in shari'ah court libraries in the Northern states of Nigeria. It used survey research method and questionnaires, interviews and observation as research instruments to collect data. At the end it was discovered that most of the libraries investigated depended on purchase as means of acquiring information resources. This consequently, impact on the information resource development in the libraries. Provision of adequate mid relevant information resources is **vital** in the speedy dispensation of justice. Moreover adequate resources could improve information provision in the courts.*

Introduction

Information resources refer to both human and material resources. For materials it denotes any materials that contain information in the library while human resources includes the personnel working in the library under investigation. Shariah Court library resources include Holy Qur'an, Hadith, law report, journals Gazette, court proceedings, official publication, law related periodical etc.

According to Osborn (1992), library and information resources include such materials as books, periodicals and audio visual materials that are provided for use of people. These materials are usually housed in a building and systematically arranged for easy retrieval. Libraries all over the world, regardless of type public, academic and special are considered to be store of knowledge. They stock published and unpublished information resources that are basic to the survival, development and progress of mankind. Example

of published information resources includes books, journals, news magazines and newspapers, while the unpublished materials includes research projects, thesis, conferences papers, workshop papers, and seminar papers law reports or proceeding papers. There is hardly any new field of human endeavour today without libraries, in print or in electronics format.

Muhammad (1980) remarks that, "One of greatest assets of mankind is information and one of man's unique assets is the ability to assimilate and make use of information." Information has been found to be very important to man and his environment." Knowledge comes into existence as a result of man's efforts to cope with his environment. The accumulation of knowledge brought innovation and changes which led to a wider recognition of the role of information in the society. As society changes, prompt supply of better and relevant information is needed in order to cope with trends of events.

Edward (1983) maintained that, Information in itself will be valueless, unless it is put to use. It is an item of knowledge which can be communicated concerning some particular facts, subjects or events. Information is knowledge which is transferred from one person to another to encourage action for decision making. It is a fact, that human beings whether at home or place of work, need information for survival within the environment in which they live or work. Hardly can organization survive without the free flow of information in order to carry out its work. Information is very important for personal and material development. UNESCO (1977) identified Information as an essential part of a nation's resources and access to it is one of the basic human rights. Information is not only a national resource vital for scientific and economic progress, but is also a medium for social communication. The importance and need for information for crucial functions in communication can not be overemphasized. Therefore, the economic and social value of libraries and other information system can not be under estimated.

Fleming (1990) added that, libraries and other information system should be designed to serve actual needs as well as anticipated needs. Fleming also maintained that, in order to render effective services to meet these actual needs. "Library specialists must be technically and professional trained". Information therefore, is an important

ingredient in all human endeavours and human survival in any society. Information today is a commodity, packaged and sold at an obtainable price. It is regarded as vital resource that must be managed to achieve organization goals and management option in survival technique. There cannot be any effective research without adequate up to date proper information.

There is the need for libraries to have relevant information resources that can serve the needs of the parent institution in which the library is located. Aguda (1985:45) remarks that, "University, College or polytechnic libraries must possess a number of books and current periodicals, in addition to other types of information resources in certain subjects to be able to satisfy the basic information and bibliographic needs of the institutions".

The present situation in the Northern states of Nigeria, with shari'ah in plementation, requires functional libraries and information services with adequate resources for the Grand Khadis, Khadis, Lawyers and other judicial staff of the shari'ah courts. This is to facilitate administration of justice. Therefore, the central focus of this study is to assess, the extent to which libraries are influencing the duties and responsibilities of the judges in the shari'ah courts with regards to resources and services rendered by their libraries.

Shari'ah court judges, like any other legal worker, equally use information resources to discharge their duties. This can be seen in their work especially in legal drafting, citing of cases, making decisions and citing authorities to buttress a point of decision. Moreover, judges have been trained to be conscious of the legal implication of their actions. Mohammed (1997) asserted that dependence on books by judges and lawyers are important to achieve coherence in law, and consistency in the dispensation of justice. But the level of use of shari'ah court library services in the Northern states of Nigeria has not been fully appreciated. Perhaps a study on library services reveals the extent to which the libraries influence the judges in their duties. The nature of resources and services and the problems confronting the libraries, can also be investigated.

Review of Related Literature

Availability of relevant information resources is *se qua non* to effective library services. Brown, R. (1980) in his findings report that, "Book availability is an indicator of stock effectiveness". Libraries also consider their task to be that of collecting, storing, and organizing books. Most Libraries consider it their task to make these books available to their users. Making Books physically available in the courts when wanted by users is central to librarianship". The cardinal rule of library stock control is that both the information resources and the acquisition policy should be related to the level of demand for the items. Acquisition policy should help a library to decide on what to buy where and when.

The problem of managing the physical resources of a court library depends on the availability of the resources. Availability requires workable performance measures to back it up even if the ultimate benefit to the individual user and to the community is difficult to access. Access to the resources of library is also a factor of availability. Without the physical presence of a document a user can not access anything. Therefore, the effectiveness of any library is best measured in terms of availability access and demands for its resources and services. A study such as this will provide data and information on availability and accessibility of the resources of shari'ah court libraries, in the Northern states of Nigeria.

The availability of books is clearly central to information provision in courts and it is used as a measure of library performance. Acquisition, discarding, binding, lending and duplication policies of the libraries should be evaluated principally, though not exclusively, in terms of book availability, in terms of the probability that the users will find what they seek when they seek it ". The pursuit of maximum book availability is likely in practice, to be mitigated by the pursuit of additional objectives, such as achieving comprehensiveness in the collection in some subject areas. Robert (1978:368) stated that, "The immediate availability is a useful measure of library performance"

The intellectual access to available information has, since been a major preoccupation of librarians. Its importance has been reflected in the efforts devoted to the design and creation of bibliographies, catalogues, classification scheme, and other

devices that help establish the existence of individual documents and their relevance to specific enquiries.

However, intellectual access needs to be accompanied by physical access if the documents are to be used. The provision and use of information resources have grown to be both a political and social responsibility. It appears that this responsibility will continue to grow with increases in the production of information and the number of its users." The daily growth of information first, brings about problem of location, acquisition, organization, and dissemination. Secondly, the growths bring about problem of making, easily, available to potential users the right type of information at the right time. Robert. (1978:370), remarks that, immediate availability of information is an important but limited concept. As a standard of library services it is rather one dimension, since it reflects the library capability to satisfy a demand at one discreet moment in time, not as a continuous process. In that sense the concept of immediate availability is misleading, for it projects library as a mere warehouse in which materials are either available on demand or not."

The main cause of immediate unavailability is waiting for recalled book to be returned. Change in loan policies and acquisition of multiple copies are two important methods for improving availability of information resources. Robert (1978:371). Loan policies affect availability library resources on the shelves. This can be adjusted to improve availability. Availability of books is lowered by patrons who violate loan policies. It is necessary to enforce loan policies." Library service can be improved by ensuring that delays are not needlessly prolonged, as may happen when reshelving becomes severally backlogged. Immediate availability is a useful measure of library performance, but it must also be realized that delays will never be entirely eradicated. Determining the causes of delay and eradicating them is an enormous task. A perfect and immediate availability is an ideal worth striving for, but it is important not to lose sight of difference between unnecessary and justifiable delay.

The applications of book availability have contributed greatly to the knowledge of library functions. Buckland (1995) stated that research on book availability has emphasized immediate availability. Defining availability in terms of immediacy is a

Review of Related Literature

Availability of relevant information resources is *se qua non* to effective library services. Brown, R. (1980) in his findings report that, "Book availability is an indicator of stock effectiveness". Libraries also consider their task to be that of collecting, storing, and organizing books. Most Libraries consider it their task to make these books available to their users. Making Books physically available in the courts when wanted by users is central to librarianship". The cardinal rule of library stock control is that both the information resources and the acquisition policy should be related to the level of demand for the items. Acquisition policy should help a library to decide on what to buy where and when.

The problem of managing the physical resources of a court library depends on the availability of the resources. Availability requires workable performance measures to back it up even if the ultimate benefit to the individual user and to the community is difficult to access. Access to the resources of library is also a factor of availability. Without the physical presence of a document a user can not access anything. Therefore, the effectiveness of any library is best measured in terms of availability access and demands for its resources and services. A study such as this will provide data and information on availability and accessibility of the resources of shari'ah court libraries, in the Northern states of Nigeria.

The availability of books is clearly central to information provision in courts and it is used as a measure of library performance. Acquisition, discarding, binding, lending and duplication policies of the libraries should be evaluated principally, though not exclusively, in terms of book availability, in terms of the probability that the users will find what they seek when they seek it ". The pursuit of maximum book availability is likely in practice, to be mitigated by the pursuit of additional objectives, such as achieving comprehensiveness in the collection in some subject areas. Robert (1978:368) stated that, "The immediate availability is a useful measure of library performance"

The intellectual access to available information has, since been a major preoccupation of librarians. Its importance has been reflected in the efforts devoted to the design and creation of bibliographies, catalogues, classification scheme, and other

devices that help establish the existence of individual documents and their relevance to specific enquiries.

However, intellectual access needs to be accompanied by physical access if the documents are to be used. The provision and use of information resources have grown to be both a political and social responsibility. It appears that this responsibility will continue to grow with increases in the production of information and the number of its users." The daily growth of information first, brings about problem of location, acquisition, organization, and dissemination. Secondly, the growths bring about problem of making, easily, available to potential users the right type of information at the right time. Robert. (1978:370), remarks that, immediate availability of information is an important but limited concept. As a standard of library services it is rather one dimension, since it reflects the library capability to satisfy a demand at one discrete moment in time, not as a continuous process. In that sense the concept of immediate availability is misleading, for it projects library as a mere warehouse in which materials are either available on demand or not."

The main cause of immediate unavailability is waiting for recalled book to be returned. Change in loan policies and acquisition of multiple copies are two important methods for improving availability of information resources. Robert (1978:371). Loan policies affect availability library resources on the shelves. This can be adjusted to improve availability. Availability of books is lowered by patrons who violate loan policies. It is necessary to enforce loan policies." Library service can be improved by ensuring that delays are not needlessly prolonged, as may happen when reshelving becomes severally backlogged. Immediate availability is a useful measure of library performance, but it must also be realized that delays will never be entirely eradicated. Determining the causes of delay and eradicating them is an enormous task. A perfect and immediate availability is an ideal worth striving for, but it is important not to lose sight of difference between unnecessary and justifiable delay.

The applications of book availability have contributed greatly to the knowledge of library functions. Buckland (1995) stated that research on book availability has emphasized immediate availability. Defining availability in terms of immediacy is a

useful indicator of library service, since a perfect immediate availability rate is ideal. It is a situation in which all requests are immediately satisfied'.

Akinola (1985:235) stated that, "The collection of each law library especially the academic libraries, moved from handful collection of Government publication and gazette to various publication on all law related subjects". Lawyers are requested to present written brief in appeal cases. More over, there are new kinds of books and even new branches of law hence the emergence of such classifications as labour law, energy law etc. The combination of these changes result a new directive in law libraries collection, especially court libraries which now collects various books on many subjects beyond their former practice that was limited to the collection of more or less reference sources. For instance, law libraries can purchase books on other subjects such as English, religious or culture in order to prepare the judges and other staff of the judiciary for the challenges ahead. The information resources in the law libraries apart from books include audio visual materials such as video and audio cassettes Government publications like Gazettes and news paper chips on all subjects in law emanating from different parts of the country. It also includes Law reports from Common Wealth Countries and United State of America, and Law reports published in the country and judgment of the Supreme Court are now included. Finally, Law libraries today also stock Law reviews, journals legislative proceedings and other law related periodicals, official publications, Publication of international organization, foreign law, Religious law and Roman law etc.

Jenkins (1990) remarks that, "practicing firms of lawyers buy non-legal materials such as basic volume in Engineering, medicine, etc. to acquire knowledge of the subject to handle their cases better". Also, academic and research law libraries acquire non legal information resources to support changes in curricula of the law schools. The resources are acquired by Government and sometimes by donations by individual and organizations and process and manage by the librarians.

Scope

The research covers some states in the Northern Nigeria the operate Shairah Courts they include;; Abuja, Bauchi, Borno Kaduna. Katsina, Kogi, Yobe and Zamfara

Methodology

The research method used in this study is on to interview and observations, physical observations and interview were the instruments used to collection data for the purpose of this study.

Discussion

Table 1 below shows the various methods by which information resources are acquired in shari'ah court libraries in the Northern states of Nigeria.

Table 1; Method of Information Resources Acquisition in Shari'ah Court Libraries.

Name of Library	Method of information resources Acquisition				
	purchase	Gift	Donation	Solicitation	Exchange
Abuja	√	-	-	-	-
Bauchi	√	-	-	-	-
Borno	√	-	-	-	-
Kaduna	√	-	-	-	-
Kano	√	-	-	-	-
Katsina	√	-	-	-	-
Kogi	√	-	-	-	-
Sokoto	√	-	-	-	-
Yobe	√	-	-	-	-
Zamfara	√	-	-	-	-

The table above reveals that all the ten (10) shari'ah court libraries studied use purchase as a method of acquiring information resources in their libraries. Therefore, this means that the libraries do not receive resources from other means such as gift, donations, etc. The implication of this is that materials for research is acquired based

on what the library can afford. This also means that the libraries are missing a lot by not utilizing other means of getting resources free of charge or with less cost.

Availability of information refers to the physical presence of information resource within the library. An information resource in this study refers to such items as books, Journals, law reports, dictionaries, encyclopedia, almanacs, etc. Library and its development are central to library services provision which may be used as a measure of library performance. The measurement of the performance equally depends on availability and utilization of resources in the library. Therefore, the availability of information resource in shari'ah court libraries is presented in table 2 below

Table 2 Number of titles 10available in shari'ah court libraries.

LIBRARY	TITLE
Abuja	2,500
Bauchi	3,000
Borno	2,500
Kaduna	1,500
Kano	2,000
Katsina	2,500
Kogi	1,000
Sokoto	4,290
Yobe	1,580
Zamfara	3,500

Table 2 above, the general picture is that all the libraries investigated have collection of 1,000 and above. Sokoto shari'ah court library has the highest (4,290) number of volumes. Followed by Zamfara shari'ah court library which has (3,500) of information resources. Kogi state shari'ah court has the least number of volumes of information resources which recorded (1,000) volumes.

Table 3 Types of information resources available in the shari'ah court libraries in the northern states of Nigeria

Types of information resources	NAME OF LIBRARY									
	A	BA	BO	KD	KN	KT	KO	SO	YO	ZA
Books 500-1000		√	√				√		√	√
1000-1500	√			√						
1500-2000					√	√		√		
Law reports less than 500						√	√	√	√	√
500										
Above 500	√	√	√	√	√					
Journals less than 500	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
500										
Above 500										
Gazette less than 500	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	
500										√
Above 500										
Electronics media	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Key

- A Abuja
- BA Bauchi
- BO Borno
- KA Kaduna
- KN Kano
- KA Katsina

KO	Kogi
SO	Sokoto
YO	Yobe
Za	Zamfara

Table 3 above describes the types of information resources available in the shari'ah Court libraries investigated. The result reveals that Kano and Sokoto states shari'ah court libraries have the highest number of books with 2000 volumes of books each. The size of the collection of law reports in the libraries indicated that Abuja, Borno, Kaduna and Kano have the highest number of law reports, over 500 copies each. The table further reveals that the journal collections in all the libraries are few, less than 500 titles. In the case of Gazettes all the libraries have less than 500, with the exception of Zamfara state shari'ah court which recorded 500.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, the researcher concludes that shari'ah court libraries in the Northern states of Nigeria mostly use purchases as method of information resources acquisition. The libraries are also stocked with books, journals and gazette without, electronic information resources. Definitely, this means that the libraries are not moving towards the modern trends in information technology. Perhaps, this could affect the services rendered by the libraries. This is because the information resources and services which could be accessed electronically will not be available. Electronic information resources offer greater advantages to the users of the library.

Shariah courts are supposed to be dynamic and also to be able to effectively support the courts in judicial activities. This presupposes that the library should be to be stock with the right kind of materials which could satisfy the information requirements of the judges. If this could be provided the effectiveness of the courts would be enhanced.

The librarians of shariah court library should go beyond sitting librarians. They should proactive in soliciting not only for funds but also for book donation outside the proprietors of the library.

REFERENCES

- Aguda, T.A., (1985), "Development in the judiciary system" **In** T. Akinola Aguda (ed). The Challenge of the Nigerian Nation, an examination of its Legal Development 1960-1985 Lagos: Heinemann Educational Books
- Akinola, A. (1985) The challenge of the Nigerian Nation an examination of its goal and development 1960-1985. Lagos: Heinemann Educational books p.47
- American Library Association. (1980) A L A World Encyclopedia of library and information sciences, New York, ALA.
- Brown, R., (1980), Public library Administration, London: Clive Bingley p. 65-73
- Buckland, P. (1964), Libraries and universities: Addresses and Reports, Cambridge: Harvard University press.
- Edward, D., (1983), The Development of National Library and information Services: London, Winston & co. Ltd.
- Fleming, H., (1990), User Education in Academic Libraries: Library London, Association Publicity Ltd., p.19.
- Jenkins, C and Morle, M. (1990) Collection development in academic libraries: In Librarianship and information work world wide, edited by Bowker-Sour. p.4
- Mohammed, A.D., (1987), "Management use and Services of law libraries in Northern Nigeria". MLS Thesis, A B U Zaria
- Osborn C.B. (1992) Non use and loser studies collection Development: Collection Management 4(1&2) p.45
- Robert, G. (1988), Book Availability and Delivery service: The Journal of Academic Librarianship, Vol. 4, No.5