

INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF ACADEMIC STAFF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE MAKURDI

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Abstract

Information is vital for the overall development of any nation. In an academic community, lecturers need information to update their knowledge and acquire new methods of teaching and research. This study therefore sets to determine the information needs of lecturers in the University of Agriculture Makurdi and to find out ways through which they search for information in the University Library viz a viz whether the resources thereof meet their information needs. Questionnaire was used in collecting data. Data collected was analyzed using tables and percentages.

The result of the findings shows, that lecturers in University of Agriculture, Makurdi need up-to-date information in their subject areas. The Library catalogue was found to be the most used information seeking tool when compared to shelf browsing and enquiry from library staff. Current information was found to be lacking. Consequently, it was found that the patronage of the Library was very low.

The study recommends that the University of Agriculture Library, Makurdi should subscribe to current journals most especially in the field of science and technology. Provision of Internet services facilities can be most rewarding.

Introduction:

The world in general is experiencing information and knowledge explosion.

Information is regarded as the most singular variable which differentiates and determines, to a great extent, whether a country is in the 1st, 2nd or 3rd World today. The dichotomy between the Northern and Southern hemisphere is dependent on the amount of

information generated and utilized. Daniel (1999) contends that information is knowledge and understanding that is usable by the recipient. It reduces uncertainty and has surprise value. Chukwu (2005) asserts that information is a critical resource to the growth and development of any individual or nation. According to Eze (1999), information has become very essential and effective tool of

development in any society. Virtually, every facet of social endeavour thrives and is sustained by easy flow of information. A society becomes moribund and motionless when information flow stagnates. He added that, information communication has become one of the fundamentals and encompassing process through which every social events can be positively portrayed within the society.

The University of Agriculture Makurdi came into being in 1988 as one of the seven Universities of Technologies that were established i by the Shehu Shagari administration. It was later converted to a full-fledged University of agriculture in 1988 by Babangida administration. The essence of the University of Agriculture is the introduction of innovative approaches to research, training and extension-Idachaba (1988). The mandate of University of Agriculture is the revolutionizing and transformation of Nigerian Agriculture; to make food available to most Nigerians at affordable prices. The University which is located north of Makurdi operates in three locations: North Core, Middle core and South Core.

The University Library which is the pivot of all academic activities was established to provide the basic information needs of the University Community. The main Library

named after the pioneer Vice-Chancellor, Professor Francis Sulemanu Idachaba is located at the North Core of the University with a collection of 33,000 volumes majoring mainly in Agriculture, Sciences and Engineering.

In addition the University Library operates three faculty libraries. The Veterinary Library in block A, College of Science and Science Education Library in block B both at South Core and the College of Engineering Library located in Engineering Complex.

Assessing the information needs and seeking behaviour of lecturer in the University of Agriculture, Makurdi becomes paramount when viewed against the backdrop of information needs and the established channels (mechanism) of accessing the information.

Academic Staff need information not only to stimulate ideas but also to update their knowledge and acquire new methods of teaching. The overall approach to studying information needs of users in the context of research activities do not only enhance the understanding of information seeking behaviour but also assist in identifying their information needs.

Many factors have prompted the search for information. Among these are individual task, place of work and place of study. Igbeka (2001), Burkett (1992).

Sangal (1998) noted that the need to know the information seeking behaviour of the clientele of any library arises from the necessity of libraries to

satisfy users request and as such put libraries in more functional status.

Statement of the Problem

Since the establishment of the University of Agriculture, Makurdi in 1988 with the University Library to provide information resources and services for the transformation of agricultural sector through teaching, research and extension services, it is observed that much has not been done in the information needs and seeking behaviour. It is also noted that, research on information needs of lecturers has not been carried out in the library. Very little is therefore known about their information needs.

The need to determine the information needs and seeking behaviour of lecturers in the University of Agriculture, Makurdi prompted the researchers' quest for this investigation.

The Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study will cover the following:

1. To find out the information needs of lecturers in University of Agriculture, Makurdi.
2. To determine the information seeking behavior of the lecturers in University of Agriculture, Makurdi.
3. To determine the sources and channels through which lecturers in University of Agriculture, Makurdi seek information.
4. To determine the extent to which the University of Agriculture, Makurdi Library meets the information needs of lecturers.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because, it will identify the actual information needs and seeking behaviour of lecturers in University of Agriculture, Makurdi. The result will help the University of Agriculture, Makurdi Library to improve the scope and efficiency of its information systems and services to encourage maximum utilization by the academic staff.

Review of Related Literature

Studies in information needs and seeking behaviour are central to information studies. There exist several studies on information needs and seeking behaviour of different group of users.

Information as a tool of development in all aspect of human life especially agricultural information has been described by Nwali (1992), Ozowa (1995), Adimorah (1995), and Osoro

(2001) as very necessary for agricultural production. Lack of Agricultural information, according to them, militates against the far-reaching innovation that would have boosted production. On the other hand Stoker and Cooke (1996), Abah (2001) and Garcia (2006) noted that the dissemination of agricultural information has contributed immensely to the impressive performance in Agricultural production.

To meet the information needs of lecturers, Bozimo (1983), Jam (1992) and Awojobi (2004) found that the library is one of the chief sources of information and journals constitute the major document used. They also found that information needs are mostly job directed. Lecturer's low patronage of university library was found to be as a result of paucity of current and relevant resources in relation to science based disciplines.

While stressing the need for the information needs of lecturers to be met, Ogunkoya (2002) noted that the research output of any academic staff unlike other staff depends largely if not entirely on the available usable research information.

Information seeking behaviour varied depending on an individual task or work. Hsieh's (1996) investigation of information seeking behaviour of juniors at two universities in USA revealed that they use online catalogue. Izah's (1996) findings

show that Extension specialist and technical officers at Ahmadu Bello University seek information by asking colleagues. Rencker (1992) noted that 31 members of Stair Ford University Academic Staff create information to satisfy their needs. Kushik's (2002) findings show that scientist working in a university in Haryana search information through indexing. Labsin Suriya's (2004) research work on information seeking behaviour of faculty members shows that the information needs were met through regular visit to library.

Methodology

The survey research method was adopted. Data was collected using questionnaire. One set of questionnaire was Constructed in which questions were asked concerning bio-data and their different information needs, the way they sought their information, the extent to which the University of Agriculture Makurdi Library satisfied or provided these information and problems encountered in seeking information channels and sources.

The questionnaires were administered directly to the lecturers by the researcher. Data was collected and analyzed using tables and percentages.

The population of this study comprised of lecturers in the University of Agriculture, Makurdi. From the targeted

population of 300 lecturers, the researcher decided to sample out 160 (53%) lecturers for the study because it would not be easy to access the entire population. For the lecturers to be fully represented a simple random sampling was used to select an equal number of respondents from each department

.Data Analysis and Discussion

Out of the total number of 160 questionnaires administered to the 8 colleges in the University, 145 (90.63%) were returned, duly completed returned and found useable. This high percentage response is associated with the interest shown in the study by the lecturer.

Table 1: Use of Some Print Materials

S/No	Types of print materials	Frequency	Percentage
1	Journals/periodicals in core subjects field	98	40.16
2.	Books	81	33.20
3.	Conference/seminars/works hops	28	11.48
4.	Journals/periodicals	17	6.96
5.	Informal interaction with colleague	17	6.96
	Total	244	100

Respondents were asked how often they use some of the print library materials. Table 1 above revealed that lecturers in the University of Agriculture Makurdi frequently use journals/periodicals in core subject area. This ranked highest with 98 (40.16%) response. This is closely followed by books with 81(33.20%) response. The respondents were allowed multiple choices in this item which brought the total frequencies to 244 instead of 145. The above findings tally with

earlier studies of researchers like Busch and Lacy (1983), Uganneya and Zakka (1999) who stated that information needs of scientists are generally considered to be met through scholarly journals. Olsen et la (1989) noted that academic interaction is significant in keeping abreast of current research.

Interaction with colleagues was regarded as not much important by lecturers in University of Agriculture Makurdi as indicated by their response of 17[6.96%.j

Table 2: Types of Information Sources of Lecturers.

S/No	Information sources	Frequency	Percentage
1	Journals/periodicals in core subjects area	95	26.84
2	Conferences/seminar/workshops	70	19.77
3	Books	59	16.67
4	Field work/experimentation	57	16.10
5	Research Reports	34	9.61
6	Informal academic interaction	25	7.06
7	Mass Media (Radio, TV)	14	3.95
	Total	354	100

On table 2, respondents were asked to indicate the source of information on which they depend for teaching and research activities. The respondents were allowed multiple choices in this item. This gives 354 instead of 145 respondents.

On the analysis above, the result shows that 95 (26.84%) of the respondents indicated that journals in the core subject areas are the most useful source of information for teaching and research. Conferences, seminars, workshop ranked second with 70(19.77 %).

TABLE 3: Information Needs of Lecturer

Information needs	Frequency	Percentage
Simple fact Data	19	13
Description of objects	9	6
Materials	27	19

The findings in this study revealed that lecturers in the University depended more on primary sources of information such as Journals than Books which are secondary sources of information. These findings are in agreement with Bystrom (1994) and Javelin (1994) who in their separate studies stated that journals are dominant source of information sought by all and sundry. This is because they provide the respondents with the appropriate information needs

for basic information		
Up-to-date information	75	52
Guides for further reading	15	10
Total	145	100

Information needs of lecturers depend on the various programmes of the departments. The respondents were asked to identify their research, teaching needs in table 3.

Up-to-date information in related fields as shown above scored 75 (52%) as the information they need mostly for teaching and research work. Materials for basic information came second, 27(19%) description of object came last

in line of their information needs.

This result is obvious because of the nature of the University which is science oriented in its course content. Current information is an essential part of scientific research. This finding is in agreement with Ugonna (1994) who reports that lack of useful and up-to-date information on any of these needs may hinder effective teaching and the quality of research.

Table 4: Information Seeking Behaviour of the Lecturers

Types of seeking behavior	Frequency	Percentage
Enquiry from Library Staff	25	17
Use of library catalogue	74	51
Shelf browsing	42	29
Serendipity	4	3
Total	145	100

Information seeking behaviour of lecturers in University of Agriculture, Makurdi varies. In table 4 above, most of them, 74 (51%) prefer the use of the catalogue as approach to locating information materials in the library, 42 (29%) said they go to the shelves directly, while 25 (17 %) ask library staff, As few as 4(3%) said it is by serendipity. This finding is

consistent with Endiok and Bassey (2004) who conducted a study on information types and search strategies adopted by natural scientist of teaching and research institutes. The findings revealed that those researchers who approach the catalogue to ascertain information materials also go straight to the shelves. Uyfteschart (1996) agrees that experienced scientists develop short cuts and avoid delays by going straight to the shelves.

TABLE 5: Use of Library Services by the Lecturers

Use of the library	Frequency	Percentage
Very frequent	24	11.8
Frequent	50	24.6
Less frequent	65	32
Never	64	31
Total	203	100

Table 6 above shows that 65 (32) make use of the library less frequently, 50 (24) use it frequently, while only 24(11.8%) use the library very frequently.

The findings are in agreement with Owojobi (2004) who while determining the use of the University library by lecturers in

the Faculty of Science in College of Agricultural Sciences, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Nigeria, noted that the low patronage of the University Library by lecturers was due to the paucity of current and relevant resources in relation to science base disciplines.

Table 6: Lecturers satisfaction with library services

Use of the library	Frequency	Percentage
Very satisfied	4	3
Satisfied	6	4
Not satisfied	129	89
Indifferent	6	4
Total	145	100

The result of the amount of satisfaction lecturers derived from the services provided by the library showed that

129(89%) were not satisfied with the services, 6(4%) said they were satisfied, 4(3%) were most satisfied while 6(4%) were indifferent.

Table 7: Problems Encountered By Lecturers in Sourcing For Information.

Use of the library	Frequency	Percentage
Non availability of preprints	10	7
Non availability of indexing and abstracting services	13	9
Lack of current journals in subject field	122	84
Total	145	100

The problem the respondents encountered in their research activities as shown in Table 7 above is lack of current journals in their subject areas. 122 (84%) of the respondent indicated that lack of current journals in the subject areas is the major problem they encountered during their research work. As a result, the library does not meet their research needs. Non availability of indexing and abstracting services with 13(9%) frequencies was another reason While. 10(7%) frequencies hinge on non-availability of preprints, as a problem.

Conclusions

From the investigations carried out, lecturers in University of Agriculture, Makurdi 75% of the respondents preferred up-to-date information in their subject areas. As indicated in their responses, current information materials are lacking in University of Agriculture, Makurdi Library. It also revealed that the lecturers' patronage of University of Agriculture, Makurdi Library is very low. In fact, most of the respondents indicated that the current holdings of the library did not meet their information needs. The finding also established that, the library catalogue is a very important means of seeking information in the

library by University of Agriculture, Makurdi lecturers.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings, the researchers recommend that, the University of Agriculture Library should as a matter of priority, procure current and relevant information resources They should subscribe to current journals in the field of sciences and technology to keep lecturers abreast of development in their subject fields.

Lecturers should actively be more involved in the selection of information materials alongside with the library. This will facilitate the acquisition of relevant information materials in the library.

Provision of Internet facilities at affordable cost by the library is necessary to meet the information needs of lecturers. They should vigorously pursue library automation to brace up with Information and Communication Technology race.

The library catalogue be improved upon by up-dating it and the filing properly done for easy consultation by lecturers. The library should carry out a high level of current awareness services such as Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) to identify Lecturers needs and satisfy them. This is when the use of indexing and

abstracting services will fully be tapped. Process towards the automation of the library should be initiated as matter of urgency. On-line public Access catalogue is the in

thing in the world of Information and Communication Technology. The library should not lag behind.

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