

## Centre for Arid Zone Studies Library, University of Maiduguri: An Evaluative Survey of Information Services

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### ABSTRACT

The study investigates the information service of the Centre for Arid Zone Studies Library. It encompassed other areas of library Services such as staff level of assistance, collection, budgeting and users' perception. Two hundred (200) copies of questionnaires were distributed among the users of the Library. A responsive rate of 85% was achieved. The study revealed most of the problems militating against the successful implementation of most of its programme. However, satisfactory response was recorded in the area of level of information services which was 58.82% satisfactory. The study recommends various strategies to improve the library and its utilization for effective research and development that will give rise to effective control of management of drought and desertification.

### INTRODUCTION

Information is synonymous with knowledge and it is essentially required for any measure of success and development in any society. It is a basic ingredient needed to make decision, create knowledge and enhance understanding of common goals.

The advancement in technology has played a vital role in our economic political and social environments. Information has crucial roles in the advancement of knowledge (e.g.) a researcher would need information to keep himself up to date and be informed in his or her field of specialization). Same goes for all other specializations in human professional and academic endeavours. Specialized institutions usually work in well-defined subject or problem areas.

All over the world, specialized centres exist to help in finding answers to complex problem facing mankind in different societies. Where the importance of these centres are recognized or known, they are normally given all the support necessary to provide the needed information for the smooth running of their activities. These centres are held in high esteem and usually attract specialists, who are knowledgeable in the field of the institution's interest and their activities are mostly research oriented.

Research aims to provide solutions to problems. However, solutions to problems require

information, and know national development programme can be successfully, without proper information support. We can now say that information can be regarded as a national resource. Martin (1995) describes information as the 'life blood of society'. Therefore, the centre for Arid Zone Studies Library was set up to provide information in support of the activities of the Centre in the area of drought, desertification and control and sustainable development in the Arid Zone region of Nigeria. The works of specialized institutions rely a lot on the current information to the research orientation. Many specialists agree that the recent stress and disturbances in the Sahel Savannah are mainly due to human effect (annual bush burning, wood cutting etc, Gadzama (1990). Therefore, there's need for those associated with this Centre to be kept up-to-date with the recent information in their field of specialization. In developed countries, priority are given to information units dedicated to the provision of information services to meet the research needs of the Centres. These units are usually given the necessary support mainly in the area of budgetary allocation to ensure effective acquisition of current information sources in whatever form to enable it render the information service needs of its patrons as required. Qualified staff are not left out because they will organize and make available to those associated with the parent agency as and when

appropriate. This is our major concern in this study which is usually referred to as special library or research library and its information services”

### **Brief History of the Centre for Arid Zone Studies (CAZS)**

The University of Maiduguri was established by the Federal Military Government in 1975 as part of the third National Development Plan after the ecological disaster years (1972-1974). As an institution of higher learning founded in the African Sahelian region, it became imperative for the University to address itself to such regional environment problem like climatic aridity, drought and desertification, wind erosion etc, with a view of finding either solutions or ways of accommodating them. In consonance with this realization, the University of Maiduguri initiated a programme, i.e. the setting up of the Centre for Arid Zone Studies (CAZS) in 1987 as a multi-disciplinary research and training centre. It was designed to improve opportunities for studying and understanding the natural environment of the region and the interdependence of its various component, not only as a pre-requisite for long term plans for combating threats of these ecological disasters, but also to facilitate the formation of strategies for the rehabilitation and sustainable management of resources (Gadzama, 1987).

### **Objectives of the Centre**

- Provide and develop the necessary baseline information bank with which to back up research in addressing the local economic problems.
- Encourage and stimulate appropriate and practical input to rural project thereby self-sustaining and development at project sites in harmony with the farming and other land used activities.

Based on the above objectives, it is not only to provide and develop the necessary baseline information but to also sustain long term back up research in ecological, hydrological and climatology problems under the following area:

- Arid Zone Ecology and Agroforestry,
- Hydrology, hydrogeology and geomorphology,
- Climatology and metrology,
- Arid Zone Agriculture and Rural Development,

- Human and Animal Health,
- Socio-economic.

However, the above research mandate has its sub-theme, and therefore, for the research to be carried out effectively, CAZS established its own library which pays attention to the collection and maintenance of literature on the Sahelian environment. The centre information needs are enormous and include provision and utilization of current and up-to-date information in those fields of research. Information is essential for the formation and execution of plans in all spheres of human transaction and special libraries are affiliated to the Centre to attain the set goals and actualization of individual research objectives.

Every library, be it public, academic or special, is established to serve its parent organization or meet the needs of its users. Therefore, the principal purpose of CAZS library is to provide information resources to support the mandate of the centre. To achieve this aim, the library engages in selecting, acquiring, organizing, storing and disseminating recorded knowledge of information resource in the form of print and non-print materials and other information materials of research value to its patrons. Also, to establish and maintain a comprehensive depository information metadata bank on the Arid zone Studies of Nigeria in the field of climatology, Arid Zone Ecology, Hydrology, geomorphology, meteorology, human and animal etc, and establish professional relationship with other institutions of similar character in sharing of resources on the mandate of the centre.

### **Objective of the Study**

The study had the following Objectives, to

1. Examine the level of information service the library offers to its patrons;
2. Examine level of staff assistance;
3. Examine the currency of information
4. Examine the extent of satisfaction of the collection.

### **Scope and Limitation of the Study**

This study focused on the information services of the Centre for Arid Zone Studies Library. It encompasses other areas of library service such as staff level of assistance, collection budgeting, environment and users' perception in relation to

how it affects information services for improvement.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study identified the information transferred from library services to research and development activities, using the service to justify continuous support by the Centre. Research Library or special libraries are supposed to be prime movers of research and training of specialist in their fields, hence the need to appraise from time to time or at regular intervals the services of this library. The problem of the Arid Region in the country cannot be over emphasized as the environment is harsh to human, animal and crops, where research development is much needed.

### **The Role of Special Library**

History has made us to know that there exist some special libraries in the northern part of the country as far back as 1919 e.g. the Agricultural institute library, Geological survey library of Nigeria, Kaduna with about 2800 materials. Lake Chad Research Institute Library and Arid Zone Studies Library are joining the other existing special libraries in the north in dissemination of information.

Libraries are depository of knowledge. Therefore, they are essential in our national development, most especially the special library system serves as a library for specific group of people and provides specific information resources to meet the needs of the organization. The role of special library can best be explained under the following information and research role. Each centre is established for research purpose and it is the library that supports and provides information for research nature of the institution. Research proposal is obvious and necessary to a researcher, thus the need for a library and information management. According to Denning (2007), "information Management (IM) is the collection and management of information from one or more sources and the distribution of the information to one or more audiences" This sometime involves those who have a stake in or a right to that information. Haruna and Maba Wonku (2001) stress the importance of information for every profession by affirming that legal luminaries depend fully on a nugget of relevant, precise and timely information for success. In any given library, it is imperative to identify information needs of user as they assist in determining the

appropriateness of library information resources aimed at meeting the community needs.

### **Research Role**

Oloye (1999) defined research as an inquiry into problem and the intent is to find a solution through a formulized and systematic approach involving collection, analysis and interpretation of pertinent data for researcher, always from knowing what is available, is able to build upon it through literature review, thus the need to check libraries to find out existing information to avoid duplication. Special libraries help researchers by providing bibliographical services, indexing, current awareness services and selective dissemination service. Research has significant impact on human endeavour and this accounts for the importance attached to it by scholars and researchers.

### **Information Role**

The centre library is not only an information system but also a communication system. The more complex the organization is in its bureaucracy, the more comprehensive is the library in the provision of information and its requirement, the greater its dependence upon library base information service. The Library is also expected to perform all the traditional and modern roles of a library like preservation and inter-library loan services since no library is complete and comprehensive. Now internet has replaced much of the workload of inter-library loan services All the above services can be delivered, when profiles are maintained, of all those walking with the parent agency and staff that are attentive to detail and trained in information management. The library mostly play greater roles in the reference service since readers are mostly different in their quest.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Many business, industrial, research and professional organizations maintain libraries that address their particular needs. Some of the most famous special libraries function as independent institution. The IITA Library in Ibadan Nigeria specializes in agriculture and early print, none-print materials and manuscripts.

According to Encyclopedia |Americana, special libraries have existed ever since the advent of specialties. Their present became widespread because their services were needed by all who were concerned with those specialties. It cited

that by 1593 there was a medical library of over 0,000 volumes at Marischal College in Aberdeen. Also in 1909, a group of twenty six (26) libraries under the leadership of John Cotton Dana Founded the special Association, with objective of promoting special library. The slogan of the special libraries Association, “putting knowledge to work” give a good description of what to do.

Osundina (1976) in his article “Element of Special Librarianship stated that for a library to be special, it most render services. However, according to UNESCO (1972) define special library as “a department of faculty responsible for the acquisition, indexing and distribution of concerned with the work of a specialized organization of special group of users.

According to Aguolu (1983) by their very nature, special libraries are unique, not only as library differs widely from another business library if it is unrealistic to apply public library standard, implies generally hence paradoxical”. Aguolu (2002) also believed the library is to provide the level of information services expected of it. He also described the types of basic services to all special libraries, as current awareness and information retrieval and the current awareness services includes the provision of information list e.g. access on list, selective dissemination of information (SDI) involving distribution of copies of the content page both physical and online, new issues of journals in accordance with predetermined interest profile of the organization members, while the information retrieval services involve adequate provision and effective use of various access tools such as indexes abstracts, catalogue, CD-ROM Bibliography location of what is available locally as well as in other libraries within and outside the country. However, no knowledge study has been done on the information service of centre for Arid Zone

StudiesLibrary. These are other related works, (Nedosa, 1997; Igwoli, 1974; Aguolu 1984 and Ori 2000).

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In conducting this survey, questionnaires were exhaustively used couple with interview, observation to ratify and rationalize some of the responses made by respondents. The questionnaires were randomly distributed to users of the library who comprised of mainly researchers, postgraduate students, lecturers and final year students who conduct their project research related to environment in the field of agroforestry, drought and desertification, Geographic Information Services (GIS) and disaster management.

#### Research Design

According to Asika (1991), research design is the structuring of investigation aimed at identifying variables and their relationships to one another. However, the figures derived from data (respondents) were also expressed in simple percentage and tables were used to enhance visual comparison of data collected from the respondents.

#### Instrument of Data Collection

Two types of question were administered. Questionnaire “A” was directed to the user of the library which consist mostly postgraduate students and other researchers. It sought to obtain some information on the services provided in the library. Question “B” was directed to the Centre researchers and sought to obtain information on the currency of information in the library

A total of 200 questionnaire were distributed and 170 were collected and duly completed. This however, represents about 85 percent of the total respondents.

**Table.** Evaluation of Collection, Recency of Materials, Service and Staff level of Assistance in CAZS Library

Types of Evaluation	Reponses					
	Excellent		Satisfactory		Unsatisfactory	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Collection			60	35.30	110	64.70
Recency of Information			75	44.11	95	55.89
Level of Information Services			100	58.82	70	41.18
Staff Level of Assistance			80	47.06	90	52.94

From the table above it could be seen that 64.70 percent of the respondents indicated that the collection of the library was unsatisfactory and 35.30 percent indicated satisfactory. On the Recency of Information, 55.89 percent indicate

unsatisfactory with a close range of 44.11 percent, satisfactory. On evaluating the level of information services, the table above reveals that 58.82 percent show satisfactory and more so in seeking the respondents view on staff level

of assistance 47.06 percent indicate satisfactory while 52.94 percent indicate unsatisfactory.

Looking at the analysis, table one will quickly draw so much remarks on the evaluation of each item. The level of information service score 58.82 percent satisfactory is due to the effort of the staff on the current awareness, research question and reference services provided to the user. The Recency of information, indicates 44.11 percent satisfactory and this is mainly due to the regular supply of journals like the experimental agriculture, Hydrological Science Journal, Haramata, LEISA, Global Change and some few letters and Daily Newspapers. However, the resources are not fourth coming.

In the rating of the level of assistance 52.94 percent unsatisfactory and 46.06 percent said that they are satisfy, this rating may be attributed to the lack of professional staff in the library. The library has only one professional librarian in terms of staff strength compared to the number of users. Therefore, this is need to increase staff strength of the library.

### Suggestions

1. The library should be provided with internet services as the Centre is an internationally recognized and so far, the only Centre for Arid Zone Studies n Nigeria especially in drought and desertification.
2. The library should be given two percent of any research grant coming to the Centre, bearing in mind the importance of literature in researches and its proposals.
3. The Library should be given allotted budgetary allocation for journal subscription and procurement of books.
4. The library staff strength should be identified and increased so that it can intensify the demand for selective dissemination of information service (SDIS)
5. The library needs a well-trained, motivated and versatile computer data clerk to assist the library in creating the Metadata bank system which is very germane for its operations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century information service.

### CONCLUSION

Following the discussion in this study it can be safely concluded that the centre for Arid Zone Studies Library Service are in no way meeting the overwhelming information needs of its patrons in this 21<sup>st</sup> Century information age. The

problem has been compounded by the non-provision of needed information resources and other facilities hinging on paucity of funds. It is also noted from available records that the University authority and the National Universities Commission (NUC) response to these problems fall below expectation because, for ten or more years now, no indication of budgetary allocation for either capital development or library development has been extended to either the Centre or the Library. Going from these, the role of libraries in research has not been fully realized thus engendering the isolation of researchers from their colleagues, due to lack of information resources for both print and non-print materials in the library.

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