

AVAILABILITY AND UTILIZATION OF GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS AS SOURCES OF INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR LIBRARY, NIGERIA.

By

DR.ODU, JAMES OGOM

ogomjodu@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the extent of availability and utilization of government publications as sources of information for research in the University of Calabar Library, Nigeria. Survey research design was adopted for the study whose population consisted of academic staff and post graduate Theses/Dissertations submitted between 2010 and 2014. Questionnaire, interview and direct observation methods were the instruments used for data collection. A total of seven hundred and two (702) volumes of government publications were available in the University of Calabar Library. A total 1,453 references were cited in 40 Theses/Dissertations. Out of this citations, 85 of them, representing 5.8 percent, were government publications. Faculty of Social Sciences had the highest number of government publications cited in Theses/Dissertations (3.3%), followed by the Faculty of Education (1.3). The findings also indicated that out of 80 respondents, 4 academic staff, (5%) uses government publications frequently, 12.5% uses government publications often. 27.5 % uses government publications once in a while and 55 % of the respondents don't use government publications at all. It was recommended in the study that University Libraries in Nigeria should make budgetary provisions for the purchase of government publications like other categories of information resources. This has become necessary following the inability of the various agencies of government to sustain their donation of government publications to libraries. University libraries were encouraged to publicise their resources and services to improve the level of utilization of these resources. Employing library publicity variables could create awareness and stimulate interest in the available resources and services.

Availability and Utilization of Government Publications as Sources of Information for Research in the University of Calabar.

Universities are generally referred to as citadels of learning and centres of excellence. They are established to produce the desired manpower to drive the political, economic, social and cultural development of nations. They are therefore saddled with the responsibility of research, teaching, learning and community development services. To achieve this mandate, libraries are established in the universities to provide the necessary support needed by the universities. University libraries therefore are expected to acquire information resources in all its ramifications to cater for all the programmes and courses available in the respective universities. These resources should be properly organised to ensure their availability, accessibility and utilization. As the heart or hub of academic activities in the University, the library must be a repository of recorded knowledge and must stock relevant information resources in up-to-date books, non books, electronic resources and government publications.

Government Publications are official records issued by the various agencies of government and these publications contains information on the day-to-day activities of government at all levels: Local, State or Federal government. The terms, government publications, government record or government documents could be used interchangeably to refer to publications emanating from the government circles, reflecting government policies, programmes, laws, decisions and other activities of the various agencies of government at all levels. Most often, special collection is used or defined to include government publications. Special collection refers to information resources collected because of their special nature, rarity, type, subject and origin. It includes United Nations Publications, Africana publications, archives and government publications.

According to Ogundana, *et al.*(2002) government publication are fundamental sources of information generated by the different arms of government, including ministries, parastatals, and other agencies of government. Edoka (2000) stated that government documents are publications issued or printed at public expense or published by authority of a government body. Such authority could be given by the legislative, judicial or executive branches of government.

The scope of government publications is versatile and complex, covering almost all aspects of humanity: agriculture, sport, economics, education, commerce, industry, construction, administration, foreign policy, trade,

investment, empowerment programmes, environment, resource management, revenue generation, budgeting, legislative matters, judicial matters, executive decisions and policies, reports of enquiry, health care, finance, information, conflict and conflict resolution, power supply, industrialization and a lot more. These publications are most often presented as books, journals, magazines, pamphlets, gazettes, reports of enquiry, circulars, white papers, statistical data, in-house journal, posters, hand bills, etc. Government publications can be categorised into administrative records and records of public enlightenment. Some of the administrative records are deemed to be official secret documents and may not necessarily be open to the public, except on request during litigation or by a higher level of government. The records of public enlightenment on the other hand are distributed freely as complementary copies to some categories civil and public servant, libraries, organizations and corporate bodies.

A large proportion of government publications are primary sources of information: correspondences, budget speeches, reports of enquiries, legislative and judicial proceedings, gazettes, among others. This makes them (government publications) veritable sources of information for research in almost all fields of human endeavour. Even the secondary sources could be explored usefully for research purposes. Thus, Universities as centres of research, teaching, learning and community development services would find in government publications a dependable source of information for research development. Government publications are most suitable for exploratory and trends studies that could require even the earliest of the publications. Thus, as the most current information resources are needed, the older government publications are still very relevant.

Besides, there are very old and valuable government document which are found among the collection of the National Library of Nigeria that could still be useful for research, irrespective of their dates of publication. Such publications included: *The Lagos Settlement and Colony (1862-1906)*, *Oil River and Niger Coast Protectorate (1891-1900)*, *Protectorate of Southern Nigeria (1900-1913)*, *Northern Nigeria Protectorate (1900-1914)*, *Egba United Government (1905-1913)*, *Lagos Colony (1906-1954)* and many others which could be invaluable tools for research students and fellows interested in studying the emergence of Nigeria as a developing nation, its local politics and other historical antecedent, (Ajidahun, 2006).

The University of Calabar is one of the second generation Universities in Nigeria established in 1975. The library in this University is a magnificent edifice with great architectural expression, good quality staff and a very rich collection of both physical and electronic resources. At present, the University of Calabar has ten faculties and two Institutes. This makes it a large community in need of research based information. In the University of Calabar Library, government publications are housed in two separate locations. Legal and judicial records are in the Law Reference Library, under Reader Services Division. Others are in the Research and Africana Division of the library. Government publications that can be visible online can be accessed through the Electronic Library Division.

By their content and diversity, government publications are a heritage unto the research community of which the University of Calabar is a quintessential part. Over the years, in Nigeria, libraries acquire government documents as gifts or donations by the various agencies of government at all levels. For government, the essence was to showcase and publicise government activities and programmes. There was indeed a symbiotic relationship between the government and the libraries. While the government uses the libraries as publicity variable, the libraries depended on the government as a reservoir of government publications.

According to Aguolu and Aguolu (2000), research has come to stay in Universities worldwide. All Universities accepts Theses, Dissertations, journals, Reports and other government publications as one of the major medium of reporting new knowledge discovered through research.

Statement of the problem.

In view of the rich, versatile and invaluable information embedded in government publications, one would expect to see a rich government publications collection in the University of Calabar Library and a beehive of activities by researchers wishing to take advantage of such collections to meet their research information needs. In view of the perceived symbiotic relationship between government and libraries, it is expected that government would empower libraries by consistently donating its publications to libraries as a means of advertising itself and canvassing for support. Arranging government publications in two different divisions within the same library implied that two different classification schemes were used to organise them. For example, those in the Law Reference Library were organised using the Moy's Scheme, while the others are organised using the Library of Congress Classification Scheme. It is not certain if the practice of using two different classification schemes to

organise government publications had any influence on the extent of availability and utilization of these resources.

However, preliminary observation reveals a state of apathy in the extent of utilization of government publications in the University of Calabar library. Besides, the influx of government publications into the libraries appeared to have seized in contemporary time. According to Olayi (2002), there is a critical book famine situation in Nigeria and is adversely affecting the extent of availability and utilization of library resources, the quality of university education in Nigeria and compelling researchers to look for alternative sources of information for their research needs. It becomes imperative therefore, to carry out this study aimed at investigating the availability and utilization of government publications as sources of information for research in the University of Calabar. In other words, is there government publications collection in the University of Calabar library? What is the extent of utilization of these resources? These are the issues this study sought to address.

Objectives of the study.

The objective of this study was to determine the extent of availability and utilization of government publications as veritable sources of information for research in the University of Calabar. The specific objectives of the study were:

1. Ascertain the extent of availability of government publications collection in the University of Calabar library.
2. To determine the frequency of citation of government publications in post graduate Theses and Dissertations in the University of Calabar.
3. To ascertain the frequency of utilization of government publications by academic staff in the university of Calabar.
4. To ascertain the frequency of acquisition of government publications in the University of Calabar library.

Review of Related Literature.

Government information is usually made available to the public through government printing or publishing agencies. The use of government publications for research has been acknowledged by the various references made to them and the plethora of literature on how such publications can be cited. Such publications included that of Stanley (2007). Similarly, Memphis University Library (2004), in a document entitled

Brief Guide on how to cite government publications, stressed that, government documents retrieved via online data access or the World Wide Web should include name of author, title, date retrieved and the universal resource locator (URL) to ensure proper referencing and citation to such government publications. Parper (1993), surveyed the literature on lack of utilization of government documents collections by researchers and the general public. The study recommended the need to create awareness and sensitise the public on the availability and relevance of government publications.

In a study on supervision of special collections in Federal and State University Libraries in Nigeria, Echezona, (2010) noted that the future of special collections (including government publications) is threatened by inadequate collections. Other studies that revealed inadequate government publication collection in University libraries in Nigeria included Asogwa (2003) and Onifade, (2006).

The Australia Library and Information Association (2003) reported that, the unavailability and lack of access to government publications was caused by changes in government policy. The introduction of government online policy which requires government agencies to make their publications online rather than in physical format has affected the availability, accessibility and utilization of government publications. In a study on the literature cited in doctoral dissertations in History and their availability in university libraries in the South-South Zone of Nigeria, Odu (2011) acknowledged that government publications were good sources of information for research in history, statistics and other disciplines. The finding of the study also indicated that government publications were not significantly available in the university libraries in the South- South Zone of Nigeria.

According to Ajidahun (2006), government publications are indispensable materials for research, especially at this period when the call for full democratization of government in Africa is becoming more resonant and scholars are taking more interest in democratic studies, federalism, resource sharing and other topical issues. In a paper delivered at the 40th Annual Conference and AGM of the Nigeria Library Association, Omolayole (2002) sees government publications as mines of information on the socio-political and economic life of any nation. According to him, to be familiar with what the government of a particular country publishes is to be aware of the direction that country is taking.

Research Methodology.

This study was conducted in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of academic staff and post graduate Theses/Dissertations submitted between 2010 and 2014 in the University of Calabar. Stratified random sampling technique was used in the study. The university community was stratified into ten faculties. Simple random sampling technique was used to select four faculties for the study. Questionnaire, interview and direct observation were the instruments used for data collection.

The references made in the Post graduate Theses/Dissertations (10 each) from the faculties selected that were submitted within the period covered by the study were analyzed to ascertain the government publications cited as a determinant of the utilization of government publication for research by post graduate students. Similarly, the questionnaires were administered to academic staff from the faculties selected for the study to determine their frequency of utilization of government publication as sources of information for research. Unstructured interview session was held with the acquisition librarian and some other senior librarians in the University of Calabar library to ascertain the frequency of acquisition of government publications in the library. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics (simple percentages %)

Presentation of Data.

The data derived from direct observation of the government publications collection in the University of Calabar Library is presented as follows:

Table 1: The extent of availability of government publications in the University of Calabar Library.

Sub head	Federal Govt. Publications	CRS Govt. Publications	CRS Local govt. Publications.	Other state govt. Publications.	Total
Volumes	216	301	120	65	702
Percentage	30.8	42.9	17.0	9.3	100

As shown in table 1 above, there were a total of seven hundred and two volumes of government publications available in the University of Calabar Library. Out of this number, two hundred and sixteen volumes were publication of the Federal Government of Nigeria and its agencies. This

represents 30.8 percent of the volumes of government publications available. Three hundred and one volumes, representing 42.9, percent, were the publications of the Cross River State Government and its agencies. One hundred and twenty volumes, representing 17.0, percent, were publications of the various Local Governments in Cross River State and sixty five volumes, representing 9.3 percent, were publications of other state government in Nigeria.

The data on the number government publication cited in post graduate Theses/Dissertations is presented as follows:

Table 2: The frequency of citation of government publications in post graduate Theses and Dissertations in the university of Calabar.

Faculty	Number of Theses/ Dissertations	Total references made.	Government publications cited	Percentage (%)
Agric.	10	306	11	0.8
Social Science	10	466	48	3.3
Education	10	372	19	1.3
Science	10	309	7	0.4
Total	40	1,453	85	5.8

The data in table two above showed that a total 1,453 references were cited in 40 Theses/Dissertations. The Theses/Dissertations were selected (10 each) from the four faculties sampled for study. Out of this number of references, 85 of them, representing 5.8 percent, were government publications cited in Theses/Dissertations. From the 10 Theses/Dissertations studied in each of the faculties, 0.8 percent of the government publications cited were from faculty of Agriculture, 3.3 percent from the faculty Social Science, 1.3 percent were from the faculty of Education and 0.4 percent was from the faculty of Science.

The data on the frequency of utilization of government publications as sources of information for research by academic staff in the University of Calabar is presented as follows:

Table3: The frequency of utilization of government publications by academic staff for research.

Total respondents	80	Frequently	Often	Once in a while	Not at all	Total
Frequency of use		4	10	22	44	80
Percentage (%)		5	12.5	27.5	55	100

Table 4 above showed the frequency of utilization of government publication for research by academic staff in the 4 faculties sampled for study. Out of the 80 respondents, 4 academic staff, representing 5% of the total respondents uses government publications frequently, while 10 academic staff, representing 12.5% of the respondents uses government publications often. 22 academic staff, representing 27.5 % uses government publications once in a while and 44 academic staff, representing 55 % of the respondents don't use government publications at all.

The frequency of acquisition of government publications in the University of Calabar Library.

The outcome of the interview session revealed that government publications were acquired as gift or donation by the different level government and their agencies. For quite some time now, these items had not been received from any of the agencies of government. Efforts made to acquire some of these publications by purchase had not yielded any good result. The closest you could get would be legal reports and proceedings of the various courts. These too can only be accessed at exorbitant cost from jobbers who take advantage of the unavailability these resources to rise up their prices.

Discussion of findings.

The data presented in table 1 showed that a total of 702 volumes of government publications were available in the University of Calabar Library. This is grossly inadequate for a second generation university that is striving to be among the top 10 universities in the African sub-region in terms academic excellence and qualitative research output. Government publications are among the most consisted periodic publication with high intrinsic research value. Therefore, Nigerian University Libraries are expected to have a large collection of government documents in their

holdings. This finding agrees with that of Ajidahun (2006), who observed that the volumes of government publications in university libraries is very lean because of lack of physical availability of government publications. According to him, government documents are inadequately produced hence they are not available for libraries to collect. The finding also agreed with Odu (2011) who noted that government publications were not significantly available in the university libraries in the South- South Zone of Nigeria.

The data on the frequency of citation of government publications in post graduate Theses and Dissertations presented in table 2, showed that out of a total of 1,453 references in 40 postgraduate Theses/Dissertations, 85 references, representing 5.8 percent of the total number cited, were government publications. This showed a significantly low level of utilization of government publications as sources of information for research by post graduate students of the university. The Faculty of Social Science had the highest number of cited government publications, (48 references, representing 3.3% of the government publications cited). Faculty of Education had 19 government publications cited, (1.3 %). This finding is in concert with that of Ezem, (2009), whose finding revealed that more than 50% of those who uses government publications were from the Faculties of Social Sciences and Education.

The data on the extent of utilization of government publications as sources of information for research by academic staff in the University of Calabar showed that 80 academic staff responded to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was design to elicit responses on how frequent they used government publications as sources of information for research. Out of the 80 respondents, 4 (5%) uses government publications frequently. Ten respondents (12.5%) often use government publications while 22 respondents (27.5%) used government publications once in a while. The remaining 44 respondents do not use government publications at all.

From the above presentation, it is obvious that government publications could serve as sources of reliable information for research. However, their extent of utilization by researchers in the University of Calabar is quite low. The low level of utilization of these resources could be traced to the methods of organization of government publications in the University of Calabar Library. The practice of using two separate classification schemes to organize government publications and presenting them in two separate divisions could affect the availability and utilization of these resources. This finding is in line with the view expressed by Ajidahun (2006) who noted that

one of the problems of availability and utilization of government publications in university libraries in Nigeria is that there are different classification schemes used in processing government documents. This diversity of classification schemes creates classification and retrieval problems for the librarians and the users of the libraries. According to him, the University of Jos library, Nigeria uses the adapted version of the National Library of Nigeria classification Scheme. Federal University of Technology, Akure Library uses a scheme derived from the Library of Congress Classification Scheme. Hesikiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife has a comprehensive in-house classification scheme for its government documents. The University of Ado Ekiti Library and the Adekunle Ajasin University Library, Akumgba-Akoko uses the same classification scheme used the University of Lagos Library for processing their government documents. In the university of Calabar library, the Moy's Scheme and the Library of Congress Classification Schemes are used to organise government publications.

It is startling to find that government publications have not been received, as usual, in the University of Calabar Library as gifts or donations in the last ten years. Apart from Law Books, Journals, Law Reports and other legal proceedings acquired through purchase at highly exorbitant rates, gift or donations from the various agencies of government at all levels had stop coming. This is in line with the view expressed by Ajidahun (2006), who noted that most University Libraries expect these publications to be given to them free of charge, as that was the usual practice. State-owned University Libraries, for instance, cannot understand why they should pay for what is produced by the government that fund the Universities they established. University Libraries cannot hesitate for too long to pay or not to pay for these documents as soon as they are published. Materials like gazettes, decrees and edits are likely to missed for ever if they are not picked up by libraries as soon as they are published, (Ifidon, 1998).

Conclusion and Recommendations.

It is obvious that government publications are a reservoir of recorded knowledge needed for the purposes of research in different discipline, policy formulation and decision making. This cultural heritage deserved to be treasured. There is no better way of doing this than ensuring their availability in the university Libraries, where their utilization by posterity can be guaranteed. Universities as centre of excellence should have libraries that are capable of supporting all programmes and courses offered by their parent institutions. Such libraries should move along with the global transformation in information generation, processing, storage and

dissemination. The global information environment has witness a significant shift of emphasis, from collection organization to users' needs. This requires understanding of the nature of information needed by the various categories of library users and providing information literacy training to equip library clients with the basic skill in information search and retrieval.

University Libraries in Nigeria should make budgetary provisions for the purchase of government publications like other categories of information resources needed. This has become necessary following the inability of the various agencies of government to sustain their donation of government publications to libraries.

University libraries are hereby encouraged to publicise their resources and services to improve the level of utilization of these resources. Library users may not be aware of the available resources and services offered. Employing library publicity variables could create awareness and stimulate interest on the available resources and services.

References

- Aguolu, C. C. & Aguolu, I. E. (2002). *Library and information management in Nigeria: Seminal essays on themes and problems*. Maiduguri: Ed-Linform Publishers.
- Ajidahun, C. O. (2006). The acquisition, management and bibliographic control of government publications in Nigerian University Libraries. *World Libraries*, 14 (2)
- Akinigbagbe, B. M. & Haruna, I. (2005). University autonomy: Its empowerment for revenue generation in Federal University Libraries in the North East Zone of Nigeria. *African Journal of Education and Information Management*, 7(2), 21-42.
- Asogwa, B. E. (2003). *Problems of Archives administration in three Nigerian University Libraries*. Unpublished MLS Theses, Department of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.
- Australia Library and Information Science Association, (2007).
<http://www.alia.org.au/advocacy/governmentpublications.html>
- Edoka, B.E. (2000). *Introduction to Library Science*. Onitsha: Palm Publishing and Links LTD.
- Ezem, V. O. (2009). Acquisition and use of Government Publications in Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *African Journal Online*, 6 (2)
- Ifidon, B. I. (1998). The challenges and frustration of developing research collection in Nigerian University Libraries. *Library Bulletin: Nigerian University Library System*, 3 (182), 110-123
- Memphis University Library, (2004). *Brief guide to citing government publications*. Available online <http://exhibris.Memphis.Edu>.
- Odu, J. O. (2011). *Literature cited in post graduate dissertations in history and their availability in university libraries in the South-South Zone of Nigeria*. Unpublished Ph. D. Research, University of Uyo, Nigeria.
- Ogundano, L. B., Olowosejeje, E. B. & Barknido, M. B. (2002). *40 years of library services to Nigeria: Past, present and the future*. Nigeria

Library Association's 40 years of library services to the nation. A compendium of papers presented at the annual national conference and AGM, June 16-21, 2002. Topo-Badagry, Lagos state: Eko, 2002, 34-43.

Olayi, L. (2000). ICAN boss canvasses duty cut on publishing materials. *The Guardian*, Monday February 18, pp. 19-23.

Omolayole, O. O. (2002). *40 years of library services to Nigeria: Past, present and the future. Nigeria Library Association's 40 years of library services to the nation. A compendium of papers presented at the annual national conference and AGM, June 16-21, 2002. Topo-Badagry, Lagos state: Eko, 2002, 60-73.*

Onifade, F. N. (2006). Awareness and use of special collections in Nigerian academic libraries. *Gate Way Library Journal*, 9 (1), 42-50.

Parker, J. D. (1993). Out of sight out mind: The state of government document collection and the need for awareness. *Government Publications Review*, 20 (4), 437-456.

Stanly, R. A. (2007). Electronic government information dissemination. *Collection Management*, 32 (3-4), 305-326.