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Evaluation of Medical Library Collection in the University of Calabar Library, Calabar, Nigeria

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Abstract

An evaluative study of adequacy, quality and currency of medical library collection in the University of Calabar library was carried out. Descriptive survey research design was used in this study whose population consisted of 10,075 volumes of books and 880 journal issues in the programmes offered in the Medical College, University of Calabar. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 7 out of the 21 programmes offered in the medical college. Thus, the sample size comprised 5,620 volumes of books and journals. Checklist was the instrument used for data collection. The data collected was analyzed using simple percentage (%). The study found that, out of the 50,000 volumes of books and journals given as the minimum requirement for University libraries by the National Universities Commission (N.U.C.), the medical collection in the University of Calabar library was 10,954 volumes. In terms of quality of the collection, 95.9% of the books were authored by professionals, 74.3% published by reputable publishers and 97.8% were good quality production. The collection was rated low in terms of currency of resources. Only 12.0% of the books and 7.8% of the journals were very current. Thus, the medical collection was rated strongly in terms of adequacy and quality of materials and very low in terms of currency of resources. It was recommended in the study that a proactive measure should be adopted to constantly update the collection through the acquisition of current materials. Besides, the electronic library in the University of Calabar should be strengthened to adequately complement the physical collection.

1. Introduction

Universities generally are regarded as citadels of learning and centers of excellence. They consist of resources, both human and materials, needed for the production of manpower, skilled labour and facilities for research, teaching, learning, and community development. To achieve these, libraries are established in the Universities to provide the necessary support and direction to help their parent institutions to achieve their vision. Thus, University libraries are established to support the vision and mission statements of their parent institutions by systematically acquiring, organizing, preserving and disseminating information to users. They are therefore expected to build good quality collections that encompass information resources in all its ramifications. The collection is expected to support and sustain all academic programmes offered in the university, as well as the research, teaching and learning needs of its parent institution. It is on the basis of this that Yusuf and Iwa (2010) noted that “the library

should be the nerve or hub around which scholarship revolves, which both staff and students resort to for academic nourishment”.

Library collection is the totality of the information bearing resources that are available in the library. Such resources could be books, journals, reference materials or newspapers. These resources could be provided in physical or in electronic formats. Medical library collection therefore refers to an assemblage of different kinds of resources that bear medical and related information. Medical library collection is a special collection. The scope of the various resources in the collection is narrowed to Medicine and allied medical disciplines. The collection is meant to support research, teaching and community development of the university and it's environ. It is therefore important that medical library collection should be developed along the provision of approved standards. Thus, the National Universities Commission (N.U.C.) decree No. 16 of 1985, empowered N.U.C., to lay down Minimum Academic Standards for universities in Nigeria and to conduct periodic evaluation (Accreditation) of programmes and courses offered in the Universities, Consequently, medical collection in the University of Calabar library is evaluated periodically based on the recommendations of N.U.C. and the Minimum Standard of the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria, (M.D.C.N.).

Libraries have a historic mission of fostering literacy and learning. The relegation of this vital institution in recent decades, in Nigeria, is indeed a matter of great concern. Libraries, learning and reading can and do change lives and they have a role to play in determining the future of our society. Libraries are vital to education; and research has shown that current lower levels of proficiency in reading are due to underfunding of libraries and their services (Eyo, 2007). While lamenting the generally poor state of provision of library facilities and resources in most primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria, Fadero (2007) stressed that inadequate provision of libraries in schools is a general disease that is plaguing education in Nigeria. From North to South, and from East to West of the country schools are generally without properly equipped libraries to support teaching, learning and the curriculum.

Education ought to be one of the foremost national priorities in Nigeria, but successive government at different levels have only succeeded in paying lip service to education with all kinds of slogans. However, funding is, perhaps the bane of the sector in Nigeria. Given the importance of education to national development, UNESCO recommends that developing countries should allocate 26 percent of their annual budgets to the sector. However an analysis of the federal government's allocation to that sector in the last nine years is nothing to cheer. In 2000, the budgetary allocation to the sector was 8.36 %; it decreased to 7 % in 2001, only to increase again to 8 % in 2002. However, in 2003 it went down again to 7 %. The dig-dong affair continued in 2005 as it fell to 11 % that year and stabilized in 2006, only to fall to

8 % in 2007. In 2008 the allocation rose for the first time to 13 %. Before 1999, the federal government's expenditure on education had been below nine percent of its overall expenditure on the average (Mordi, 2008). The supervising agency for University Education in Nigeria (N.U.C.) directed that 10% of the annual recurrent budget of each university should be set aside for provision of library resources and services. Sadly enough, this directive has never been adhered to by any university apparently due to lack of legislative provision to back it up. Leaving the university libraries in more precarious situation and lacking the basic resources needed for optimal performance.

Collection evaluation is a continuing, formal process for systematically analyzing and describing the condition of a library's collection and to indicate areas of strength and weakness as the case may be. While the areas of weakness identified would need improvement, the strong areas would require consolidation. Evaluations are conducted to provide several kinds of important information to libraries and their parent institutions. They help clarify the library's goals in the context of its mission and budget, supply data used to set funding priorities, and build a base for long-range planning and administration. Collection evaluation provides library administrators with a management tool for adapting the collection, an internal analysis tool for planning, a tool to respond systematically to budget changes, and a communication tool and data for resource sharing with other libraries. Library staff can also benefit by having a better understanding of the collection, a basis for more selection collection development, improved communication with similar libraries, and enhanced professional skills in collection development. For libraries involved in resource sharing, collection evaluation is essential in determining how each library fits into the system and what should be expected for each library's further growth in the context of the cooperative relationship.

There are different standard techniques for collection evaluation, but they can all be categorized as either collection-centered or client-centered. Collection-centered techniques examine the content and characteristics of the collection to determine the size (adequacy), quality and currency of the resources in the collection, often in comparison to an external standard. Client-centered techniques measure how the collection is used by library users. Collection-centered evaluation technique is used in this study to examine an existing collection and to compare it with the minimum accreditation standard by N.U.C. The evaluation of medical library collection by N.U.C is based on the following considerations:

1. *Adequacy*: Books, Journal and other resources, should be provided in sufficient quantity to support research, teaching and learning. The books and journals provided should not be less than 50,000 volumes,
2. *Quality*: The information resources in the collection should be of good quality. Quality is assessed based on the following considerations, authors' qualification and

specialization; the reputation of the publishers; type of materials used; international standard book number (ISBN) and international standard serial number (ISSN); and

3. *Currency*: The degree of currency is determined as follows:

- Books and journals not more than 5 years old from the date of publication are considered very current.
- Books and journals that were between 6-10 years old from the date of publication were considered as fairly current.
- Books and journals more than 10 years old from the date of publication were considered not current, Ifidon, (2006).

The evaluation of medical library collection has become imperative following the inability of so many programmes and courses in the Nigeria universities to scale through the N.U.C. accreditation exercise. As a major consideration in the accreditation exercise, the medical library collection needed to be evaluated constantly to reposition it for effective service delivery

1.1. The Problem

With the minimum standards for the provision of library resources and services in Nigerian universities well defined by the N.U.C. and by the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria, it is expected, all things being equal, that medical library collection in the University of Calabar Library would be developed along the provision of these standards. However, with the economic challenges facing Nigeria, Ogugua and Emerole (2006) cited in Odu (2012) noted the prevalence of book scarcity in Nigeria and described it as an unhealthy development. The situation has persisted due to the poor funding of education by the Federal Government of Nigeria, frustration of authors, violation of copyright laws, etc. Thus Idris (1998) cited in Odu, (2012) regrets that inadequate funding of universities in Nigeria is affecting library resources availability.

Preliminary observation of medical library collection in university of Calabar suggested that the development of medical library collection is not based on any defined standard or format. It becomes imperative to evaluate medical library collection to ascertain whether it is developed along the provision of the laid down minimum standards. In other words, is the medical library collection developed based on the provision of the existing minimum standards? Is the collection adequate, qualitative and current to merit accreditation for courses and programmes in the medical college? These are the issues this study seeks to address.

1.2. Theoretical Framework

One of the leading thinkers in the field of library and information science, Ranganathan (1931) postulated five laws to guide collection development, collection evaluation and collection utilization. These laws were recast by Aguolu, (2005) thus:

- i. Information resources are for use;
- ii. Every information seeker his resource;
- iii. Every resource, its user;
- iv. Save the time of the user and
- v. A library is a global information resource".

The 1st and 5th laws of Ranganathan (1931) are relevant here. The first law says information resources are for use. It is only information resources that are relevant in terms of quality and currency that would be used. For these resources to be used there is need for periodic evaluation to ensure that the information resources provided are relevant and current. The library is expected to examine the programmes offered in the university served and broaden its collection to embrace all the programmes and courses offered in the university. The library is expected to grow large by diversifying its collection to embrace new programmes or courses introduced from time to time.

Thus, the first and fifth laws of Ranganathan as recast by Aguolu (2005) are relevant to this study. If the library management is conscious of the fact that information resources in the library are to be used, effort would be made to ensure that the best quality and current resources are in the collection. There should be periodic evaluation to weed old and out-dated information resources from the collection. Besides, academic programmes in the universities keep increasing, new programs are set up and very large programmes are broken up to create more programmes. The library is expected to grow in terms of the size and diversity of its collection to embrace the new programmes by making provision for such programmes in its collection development efforts.

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The major objective of this study was to assess the medical library collection in the university of Calabar library, Nigeria to see if the collection can meet the minimum academic standards recommended by N.U.C. The specific objectives were to:

1. Ascertain the adequacy of the collection in all the programmes and courses offered in the Medical College, University of Calabar.
2. To ascertain the quality of medical library collection in the university of Calabar library, and
3. To determine the currency of the medical library collection in the university of Calabar library.

2. Review of Related Literature

Periodic evaluation of library collection is necessary to correct the weaknesses identified and to consolidate the strengths of the collection. Continuous review of library collection is necessary as a means of maintaining an active library collection of current and relevant resources. According to Lumande and Ojedoku (2005), library collection evaluation is necessary to measure the extent to which the collection can facilitate research and how much users can rely on it for assignments and other academic

activities. Credaro (2001) identified three ways of evaluating library collection: survey of users' opinion, (which is users centered), the conspectus approach and the cumulative approach. Lamb and Johnson (2004) agree that collection evaluation can centre on either the collection itself or on the user. They also identified three methods of collection evaluation to include: collection mapping, circulation statistics and patron survey. Yusuf and Iwa (2010) noted that "the library should be the nerve or hub around which scholarship revolves, which both staff and students resort to for academic nourishment". Emphasizing on the need to maintain a quality library collection, Adekaye, (2005) noted that a deficient library collection can have adverse effect on the institution served

In a study on continuing education, Minnesota Medical Association (2004) reported that the need for periodic evaluation of medical facilities, including medical library collection, has become imperative for the purposes of standardization and production of quality graduates. Similarly, the American Association of Blood Bank (1992) listed medical library collection as a basic requirement for effective research, teaching and learning in the management of Blood Banks. According to Nadiri and Mayboudi (2010) Library collection evaluation helps librarians to understand users' perception and contributes towards improving library services quality and meeting users needs better. The key determinant of library services is the quality of information sources, print, non-print and electronic, that is being provided to the users. Regular evaluation of library collections and services therefore is a prerequisite for

sustaining and improving the quality of library collection and services.

3. Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used in this study which was carried out in the university of Calabar library, Calabar Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of books and journals available in the medical library in the university of Calabar. The total population of the study was 10,954 volumes (10,074 books and 880 journals).

Simple random sampling technique was used to select 7 courses (programmes) offered in the college of medical science, university of Calabar, for study. Thus, the sample size was 5,620 volumes (5211 books and 409 journals). Checklist was the instrument used for data collection. The books and journals in each of the 7 programmes sampled for study were carefully examined against the National Universities Commission (N.U.C.) Minimum Academic Standard for libraries on: Adequacy, Quality and Currency of information resources. Each available book or journal was assessed to ascertain the date of publication, the author's (or editor's) qualification and specialization, the reputation of the publisher and the quality of materials used. The total number of books and journals were also ascertained. The data derived were analyzed using simple percentage (%).

4. Presentation of Data and Discussion of Findings

Table 1. The quantity of information resources available in the medical library.

| Programmes | Books | | Journals | | Total | |
|------------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|-------|
| | Available | % | Available | % | Available | % |
| Anatomy | 350 | 6.7 | 40 | 9.8 | 390 | 6.9 |
| Physiology | 1804 | 34.6 | 84 | 2.5 | 1888 | 33.6 |
| Med. Lab. Sc. | 388 | 7.4 | 28 | 6.8 | 416 | 7.40 |
| Medicine/Surgery | 938 | 18.0 | 136 | 33.8 | 1074 | 19.11 |
| Nursing Science | 590 | 11.3 | 49 | 12.0 | 639 | 11.4 |
| Biochemistry | 339 | 6.5 | 32 | 7.8 | 371 | 6.6 |
| Community Health | 802 | 15.4 | 40 | 9.8 | 842 | 14.99 |
| Total | 5,211 | 100% | 409 | 100% | 5620 | 100% |

Table 1 shows the quantity of books and journals in each programme in the medical collection of the University of Calabar, Nigeria. There were five thousand, two hundred and eleven books (5,211) and four hundred and nine (409)

journals available in all the programmes or courses sampled for study. Thus, there were 5,620 volumes of books and 409 journals in the 7 programmes studied.

Table 2. Quantity of information resources available in the medical library.

| Resources | Authored by professionals | Authored by Non-professionals | By reputable publisher | By non-reputable publisher | Good quality production | Non-quality production | With ISBN/ISSN No. | Without ISBN/ISSN No. |
|-----------|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Books | 4998 | 213 | 3874 | 1337 | 5098 | 113 | 5211 | - |
| % | 95.9 | 4.1 | 74.3 | 25.7 | 97.8 | 2.2 | 100 | - |
| Journals | - | - | 401 | 8 | 409 | - | 409 | - |
| % | - | - | 98.0 | 2.0 | 100 | - | 100 | - |

On the quality of information resources available in the Medical library, the data collected using the relevant parameters were presented in table 2. Out of a total of 5,211

books in the programmes sampled, 4,998 were authored by professionals, (95.9%); 213 were authored by non professionals (4.1%); 3,874 were published by reputable

publishers (74.3) while 1,337 (25.7) were published by non-reputable publishers. 5,098 (97.8) were good quality production in terms of material and finishing, while all the books had ISBN numbers. The reputation of publishers was measured by popularity, scope of operation and integrity. The finishing work in the books was assessed based on firmness

of binding, the quality of printing and trimming.

Similarly, 401 journals (98.0%) were published by reputable publishers while 8 journals (2.0%) were published by non-reputable publishers. All the journals available were produced with good quality materials and they all had ISSN number.

Table 3. Currency of information resources available in the medical collection.

| Resources | Very current (Less than 5 years old) | Fairly current (6-10 years old) | Not current (above 10 years old) | Total |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------|
| Books | 624 | 1,686 | 2,901 | 5,211 |
| % | 12.0 | 32.4 | 55.6 | 100 |
| Journals | 32 | 86 | 291 | 409 |
| % | 7.8 | 21.1 | 71.1 | 100 |

Table 3 shows the data collected on the currency of information resources in the medical collection. Out of 5,211 books available, only 624 (12.0%) were very current. 1,686 books (32.4%) were fairly current while 2,901 books (55.6%) were not current. Similarly, 32 journals (7.8%) were current, 86 (21.1%) were fairly current while 291 (71.1%) were not current.

5. Discussion of Findings

The medical collection in the University of Calabar Library had a total of 10,954 volumes (10,074 books and 880 journals). This represents 21.9% of the 50,000 volumes Minimum Standard by N.U.C, for university libraries in Nigeria. The study found that all the programmes and courses offered in the medical library had books and journals in the medical collection. This is in concert with the view of Odu (2012) who noted that an ideal university library should develop its collection to reflect all the programmes offered in the University served and to constantly update its collection through acquisition of current and relevant sources.

From the forgoing, one may aptly say that the medical library collection in the university of Calabar library is adequate in terms of volumes of books and journals available in the different programmes offered. Out of the minimum requirement of 50,000 volumes for university libraries in Nigeria, the medical collection in the university of Calabar library summed up to 10,954 volumes of books and journals representing 21.9% of the minimum requirement for the university of Calabar library.

A summary of the quality of the medical library collection was presented in table 2. Out of the 5,211 books in the seven programmes (Courses) studied, 4,998 were authored or edited by professionals in the relevant fields. This represents 95.9% of the books in the programmes (courses) studied. Thus, 95.9% of these books were authoritative. Similarly, 3,874 books representing 74.3% were published by reputable publishers and all the books had International Standard Book number (ISBN). Thus, the quality of the medical collection in the university of Calabar library is very high in terms of authoritativeness, reputability and qualitative in terms of production and international standard. The same high rating was recorded for journals as shown in table 2.

The currency of the medical collection in the university of Calabar library presented in table 3 was relatively low. Only 12.0% of the books and 7.8% of the journals available were current. 32.4% of the books and 21.1% the journals available were fairly current, while 55.6% of the books and 71.1% of the journals were not current. With this finding, it is obvious that the currency of the medical collection in university of Calabar library has not measured up to the standard for a university that aspires to be among the top 5 in Africa and the top 20 in the world. Although there is more emphasis globally on the development and use of electronic library, the physical library should be maintained alongside the electronic library. Besides, the university library is a research library and current journals are most vital for research development. In a collection where only 7.8% of its journals were current and 71.1% not current, meaningful research would be difficult if there were no alternative sources of information for research.

Without the support of efficient libraries, universities cannot successfully achieve the goals of education, which are: The inculcation of national consciousness and national unity; The inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes of the individual and the Nigerian society; The training of the mind in the understanding of the world around, and The acquisition of appropriate skills and social abilities and competence as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society. (NPE, 2004) cited in Aina, *et al.* (2011). Fund is crucial to the development of education and libraries; it is a *sine qua none* of performance. Therefore, the Nigerian government has to improve its funding of the education sector, by increasing funds allocated to universities. There is no gainsaying the fact that the development of functional libraries in the universities will improve the nation’s human resources that will champion the much-expected sustainable development. Massive investment in improving access to books through public institutions such as schools and libraries is a matter of absolute urgency. Books and libraries are essential especially in this information age where knowledge and information have acquired the materiality of capital and commodity, whose uneven accumulation will dictate the wealth of countries or otherwise (Igwe, 2011).

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

The high rating of the medical collection in the university of Calabar library in terms of adequacy and quality of materials vis a vis the very low rating in terms of currency, presuppose that acquisition is not given the desired attention. Or perhaps, consideration was not given to currency in the acquisition process. However, the strength of a library is measured not just by the size of its collection but also by the currency of available materials. It is the adequacy of qualitative and current collection that will attract patronage and give satisfaction to clients.

To strengthen the collection and build confidence in its patrons, the library should up-date its collections constantly through acquisition of current and relevant sources. Besides, it is imperative to strengthen the electronic library to complement the physical collection.

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