TAILORING INFORMATION TOWARDS USERS' NEEDS: EVIDENCE FROM ALVAN IKOKU FEDERAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION LIBRARY

Nwaohiri, Maria N.

SEMINAR PAPER PRESENTED AT ABIA STATE UNIVERISTY AS PART OF PH.D COURSE WORK, UTURU.

INTRODUCTION

The society is made up of human beings of different ages, geographical location, level of education and sexes. These human beings are ever in need of information to survive in the society in which they have found themselves, there is need for information to answer their questions and solve personal problems as health challenges, feeding habits, housing, education, politics, travelling and clothing.

As human needs abound, so also does information, and as users' background such as language, location, gender, age, social, status, education varied so their information needs are varied (Uhegbu; 2007). Hence, a vast amount of information and information resources are made available to the society, some are reliable, others are not, and some are good and useful while others are not. In the society, a lot of information on politics, agriculture, immigration, education, housing, clothing, security and feeding made available. Furthermore, information has been perceived globally as a significant instrument for societal development and also as an essential commodity for effective decision making and plays vital role for change and

development especially in the developed countries. (Okoro and Okoro; 2006). Hence, the dissemination of information is as important as the information itself. The value of information can only be felt and seen when it is disseminated or transferred to the most appropriate user or beneficiary and as such, the provision of the right information to the right users in the right format and at the right time becomes very fundamental. (Ahmed and Babalola; 2015).

Radio jingles on security, healthy eating habits and education announcements should be aired when the whole family will be available at home to listen to this important information. Public libraries should not provide information to the villagers on new information systems and software available in the market, rather, they should provide information on farming systems and crops. The information need of a student of biochemistry is different from that of a student of political science, the information need of a secondary school leaver is different from that of a lecturer in engineering technology department. Consequently, the information need of the client should be of paramount importance to the information provider than the source of information.

For this research topic, the Alvan Ikoku College of Education was understudied to find out if actually the information/resources acquired are tailored towards satisfying the information needs of their clients.

The Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education library formerly known as the Alvan Ikoku College of Education was established in 1963 and located in the main campus. It comprises of 14 professional staff, 8 non-professional staff, 34 junior staff and 12 administrative staff. It has 58000volumes of books and 1430journal. They subscribe to 4 titles of newspapers, opening hours are 8-6pm Mon. to Fri. and the adopted the Modified Brown loaning System. Finally, the library understudied

comprises of the following units: Administration, Acquisition, Technical Services, Readers' Services, Serials, Virtual Library (E-Library), Bindery Unit and Documents Unit.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

With the vast amount of information and information materials scattered world wide, the information provider and libraries collates these information and information materials to satisfy the information needs of the client or institution as Prasad (2000) emphasized that "information handling activities are to be based entirely on the needs of the users". To be more precise, the library chooses from very large amount of information materials from all over the world to satisfy the information needs of her institution.

It is against this background that the researcher wants to find out if the library understudied do provide information and information materials that actually satisfy the research, teaching and learning needs of this academic group in their institution, how the library understudied decodes the information needs and materials of their parent institution, if the appropriate information and information materials are channeled to the right persons or department that needs it, the source through which the appropriate information and information materials are channeled to the right persons or departments and finally, valuable information needed by staff and students that are provided by the library.

RESEARCH QUESTION:

Tahir et al (2008) quoting White states that "if academic librarians are to realistically serve academic researchers, they must recognize the changing needs and

variations in information gathering and provide services that would be most useful". Based on this premise, the researcher wants to find;

i. To ascertain if the library understudied do provide appropriate information and information materials that actually satisfy the research, teaching and learning needs of this academic group in their institution.

ii. To find out how the library understudied decodes the information needs and materials of their parent institution.

iii. To examine if the right information and information materials are channeled to the right persons or department that needs it.

iv. To find out if there are there other valuable information needed by staff and students on health, security, education, politics and entertainment that are provided by the library.

v. To examine the medium through which the appropriate information and information materials are channeled to the right persons or department as the need be.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A set of data randomly collected to be used by humans to give answer to their questions, reduce uncertainty, and assist in decision-making is information. Often times, what we call information is data, data can only become information when it is used by an individual, a group or an organization to achieve a specific purpose. (Faibisoff and Ely: 2000). Lucey 2005 & Unuagha 2011 in Unegbu & Nwanekezie 2014 defines information "data that have been interpreted and understood by the recipient of the message" while Harrod 2000 in Unegbu & Nwanekezie 2014 states
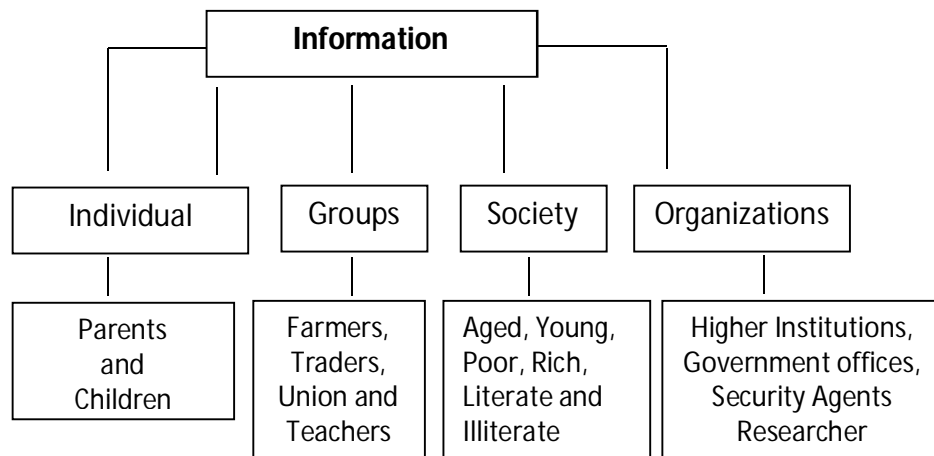
that information is the "assemblage of data in a comprehensive form capable of communication". The vast amount of information made available on print and air means that information is needed by every human being and in every sphere of life regardless of age, sex, level of education and location, Tahir et al (2008) states that "information plays significant role in our professional and personal lives. People need information to work properly in their fields".

According to Uhuegbu (2007) "every human being no matter his level of education, sophistication, and location needs and selects information from the environment, which he applies to the solution of a problem or satisfaction of a want as the case may be". Consequently, the information provider collating information from a vast amount scattered the world wide is doing so with the aim of channeling the collated information to different groups in the society as their need be, who then uses information according to their needs to make decision or apply information as a solution to a problem. Consequently, the information provider channels or distributes information to each person or group in the society according to their needs. At this point, it is pertinent to bring to light that need is a fundamental concept to information provision. The information user or client has need to have access to information to answer some questions bordering him or her or information to be applied as a solution to solve a pressing problem.

The user must have need for information before he or she goes out seeking for the information. The diagrams below are used to explain the different groups of information user and the various needs that propel one to go in search of information.

DIAGRAMS

DIAGRAM ON THE DIFFERENT GROUPS IN THE SOCIETY THAT HAVE NEED FOR INFORMATION

```
                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │    Information      │
                        └─────────────────────┘

  ┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────────┐
  │ Individual  │  │   Groups    │  │   Society   │  │ Organizations   │
  └─────────────┘  └─────────────┘  └─────────────┘  └─────────────────┘

  ┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐
  │  Parents    │  │  Farmers,   │  │ Aged, Young,│  │ Higher Institutions, │
  │   and       │  │  Traders,   │  │ Poor, Rich, │  │ Government offices,   │
  │  Children   │  │ Union and   │  │ Literate and│  │ Security Agents      │
  │             │  │  Teachers   │  │ Illiterate  │  │ Researcher           │
  └─────────────┘  └─────────────┘  └─────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘
```

Source: Researcher

DIAGRAM ON INFORMATION NEEDS

Source: Researcher
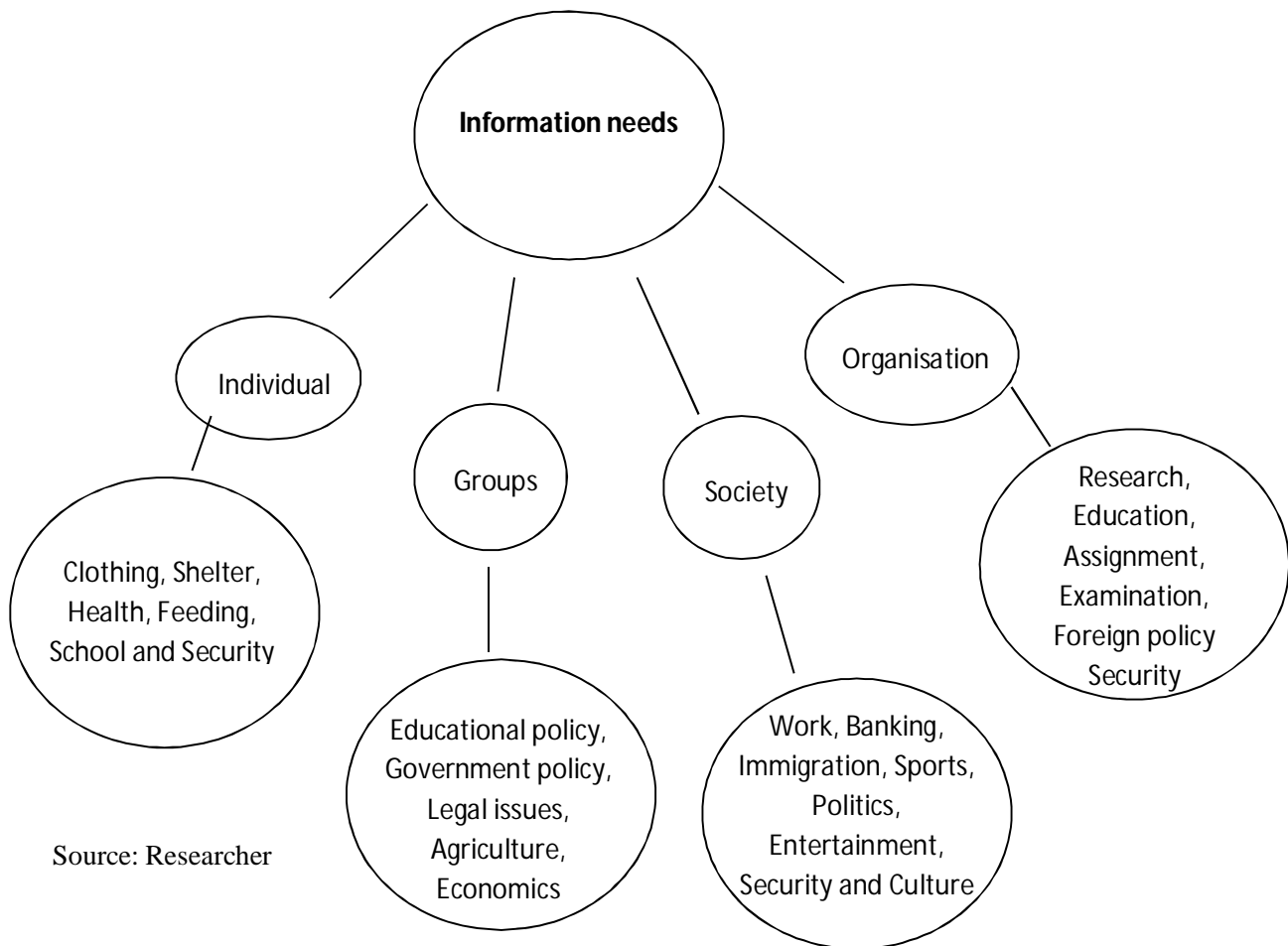
THE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION NEEDS OF HER USERS

The establishment of a library in any institution or organization is to provide her with information needed by it to plan for competitive advantage, thereby achieve its goals. In a departmental store, at the Transaction Processing System (TPS) and Decision Support System (DSS) levels, information about every customer on what type of products he or she buys, how often these products are bought by this particular customer, the age, address and occupation are stored in its information

system. The customers' details, the quantity of each product sold for each month or year and the profit made are then taken to the Executive Support System (ESS) for decision making and competitive advantage in the business world. In the same vein, the library of any organization and institution takes statistics of her users on daily basis, their age, departments and the type of information or information materials requested for and used. IFLA (2008) states that "library statistics are necessary for the effective management of libraries, but they are still more important for promoting library services to the different types of stakeholders". These statistics are not just for record purposes rather, they are used by libraries to plan, take decisions as regards to what information materials to acquire, where and how to channel the information materials to the rightful users within their parent institutions.

Ugwuanyi et al (2011) opines that "the academic library is the heart of any university both as a pivot of learning and research". Teaching, research and learning activities which are the goal and objective of every academic institution revolves around the library. Without libraries providing the appropriate information and resources for their parent institutions, furthermore, these appropriate information and resources have to be channeled to the appropriate students, staff members and departments, the goals and objectives of that institution will not be achieved. There is an advocacy from the Harvard Library (nd) advocating that "decisions for Harvard and other institutions will make in the next five years will likely shape the course of library development for the next century and will be a critical factor for transformation of libraries and the channeling of resources to meet contemporary and future needs of the academic and research communities". It is in this light that the researcher decided to understudy an academic library to ascertain if her library services are geared towards gathering appropriate information and information materials and tailoring them to the appropriate students and staff members as their

needs be to support the learning, teaching and research activities of her parent institution.

RESEARCH METHOD

The survey method was employed to collect the required data. A detailed questionnaire was prepared for this purpose and was validated by experts in the field of library and information science. Total of 15 questionnaire were distributed to collect the primary data. A total of 15 questionnaire were collected and finally collated date were analyzed, tabulated and presented in reasonable form.

FINDINGS

Validated questionnaire were distributed among a selected group of 15 library staff members of the library understudy. In this regards, stratified sampling method was followed. 11 librarians were selected from amongst the professional staff and 4 librarians from amongst the Para-professional staff of the library understudy. The entire questionnaire was filled and received from the respondents.

Table 1: distribution of questionnaire

Particulars	professionals	Para-professionals	Total	
Number of questionnaire distributed	11	4	15	100%
Number of questionnaire received	11	4	15	100%

Data input in table 1 shows that out of the 15 questionnaire distributed to 15 staff members of the library understudied, 15 questionnaire was returned meaning 100% return.

Table 2: information materials provided satisfy teaching, learning and research needs.

Information materials	Very adequate		Adequate		Inadequate		Very inadequate		Undecided	Total
Information materials are appropriate for courses taught and studied by staff and students	6	40%	3	20%	6	40%			Nil	15(100%)
Information on how to find resources elsewhere are provided for staff and students by library staff.	6	(40%)	3	(20%)	6	(40%)			Nil	15(100%)
Information materials that answer assignment questions and research queries are made available to staff and students upon request	4	(26%)	5	(33%)	4	(26%)	2	(13%)	Nil	15(98%)
Use of social media and real time services to alert the various departments of the arrival of new materials appropriate for their courses	2	(13%)	1	(6%)	6	(40%)	2	(13%)	4(26%)	15(98%)

From the table above which is on the provision of appropriate information materials to meet information needs of faculty and students, six (40%) staff members respectively indicated that they are very adequately and inadequately respectively, provided with information materials needed each time they walk into the library. While 3 (20%) indicated that adequately, information materials needed are provided for them. In collecting data on library staff equipping faculty and students with information on how to find resources elsewhere, 6 (40%) staff members respectively gave positive response on very adequate and inadequate while 3 (20%) indicated adequate. Data gathered on availability of information materials that answer assignment questions and research queries shows that 4 (26%) gave positive response on very adequate and inadequate respectively while 5 (33%) and 2 (13%) responded adequate and very inadequate respectively. The use of social media to

alert faculty and students on new arrivals, the findings are; 6 (20%) responded inadequately, 1(6%) adequately, 6 sometimes and 2 (13%) very inadequate.

Table 3: information needs and materials of users

Information needs and materials of users	adequate		Very adequate		Inadequate		Very inadequate		Undecided		Total	
Recommendations for new or different resources are listened to by library staff	4	(26%)	5	(33%)	4	(26%)			2	(13%)	15	(98%)
Reaching out to various departments to gain knowledge of their information materials needs	4	(26%)	4	(26%)	4	(26%)	1	(6.6%)	2	(13%)	15	(98%)

Table 3 is to find out ways in which the library understudied acquaints herself with the information needs of her users. The table above shows that the responses on library staff listening to recommendations for new or different resources is as follows; 4 (26%) adequate, 5 (33%) very adequate and 4 (26%) inadequate while that of reaching out to departments to gain knowledge of their information materials needs are; 4 always, mostly and sometimes respectively and 1 never.

Table 4: provision of other valuable information

Provision of other valuable information on	Adequate		Very adequate		Inadequate		Very inadequate		undecided		Total	
health	8	(53%)	4	(26%)	3	(20%)					15	(98%)
Education	11	(73%)							4	(26.6%)	15	(99.6%)
Housing	5	(33%)	3	(20%)	5	(33%)	2	(13%)			15	(100%)
Politics	5	(33%)	7	(46.6%)	3	(20%)					15	(100%)
Banking	4	(26%)	4	(26%)	7	(46.6%)					15	(100%)

Table 4 shows provision of other valuable information. Result sketches that provision of information on health has the following responses; 8 (53%) as adequate, 4 (26%) as very adequate and 3(20%) as inadequate. Education has this response; 11 (73%) as adequate and 4 (26%) were undecided. Housing; 5 (33%) as adequate, 3 (20%) as very adequate, 5 (33%) as inadequate and 2 (13%) very inadequate. While, banking; 4 (26%) as adequate another 4 (26%) as very adequate and 7 (46%) as inadequate.

Table 5: mediums of conveying appropriate information to the right user

Mediums (use of social media and others)	Adequate		Very adequate		inadequate		Very inadequate		Undecided		Total	
Mobile phone	3	(20%)	1	(6.6%)	6	(40%)	1	(6.6%)	4	(26)	15	(100%)
Blog			2	(13%)	3	(20%)	4	(26%)			9	(60%)
Facebook	2	(13%)	3	(20%)	2	(13%)	3	(20%)			10	(66.6%)
Twitter	3	(20%)	2	(13%)	1	(6.6%)	4	(26%)			10	(66.6%)
flyers	2	(13%)	3	(20%)	3	(20%)	7	(46.6%)			15	(100%)
Loud speakers at strategic points where staff and students gather for leisure	2	(13%)	4	(26%)	1	(6.6%)	8	(53%)			15	(100%)

Table 5 reveals that the library understudied tries to some extent to provide the appropriate information materials to satisfy faculty and students needs as regards to teaching, learning and research, but then not much is being done to use social media to alert their users of the existence and arrival of these appropriate information materials and other valuable information. The findings from the table above shows that the use of mobile phone to convey appropriate information to the right user is as follows; 3 (20%) as adequate, 1 (6.6%) as very adequate, 6 as inadequate and 1 very inadequate. Blog; 2 very adequate, 3 inadequate and 4 very inadequate.

Facebook; 2 always, 3 mostly, 2 sometimes and 3 never. Twitter; 3 always, 2 mostly, 1 sometimes and 4 never. Fliers; 2 always, 3mostly and sometimes respectively and 7 never. Loud speakers; 2 always, 4 mostly, 1 sometimes and 8 never.

CONCLUSION

Data gathered in the course of this research has shown that the library understudied to some extent acquire, collate and store information and information materials to satisfy the information needs of their users which should be of paramount importance. Secondly, not much is being done by the institution understudied as regards to alerting their users about the existence of appropriate information materials and information that could satisfy their quest for information, awareness of appropriate information and information materials plays a major role in helping the information seeker getting the appropriate information to satisfy his/her information needs. Therefore, this research has proved that most information are gathered and tailored towards users' needs.In conclusion, the researcher recommends that tailoring information towards users' needs also involves advocacy whereby the right channel of conveying the appropriate information/materials to the appropriate user is employed in creating awareness. The use of social media goes to a great extent in creating information/materials awareness faster, conveniently with less cost.

REFERENCES

Ahmed, A. O. and Babalola, G. A. (2015). Electronic publishing, Issues and Themes in Publishing. In K. N. Igwe and A. O. Ahmed (Eds). Zeh Communications Ltd. Lagos.

Faibisoff, S. G. and Ely, D. P. (nd). Information and information needs. *Information Reports and Bibliographies.* 5 : (5), p2

Harvard Library (nd). *Symposium on sustainable models for print storage in 21st century libraries.*www.library.harvard.edu/ssmps. Accessed on 29/07/2015.

IFLA (nd). Library statistics manifesto Accesses on 29/07/2015 fromwww.ifla.org/files/assets/statistics-and.../library-statistics-manifesto-en.pdf

Okoro, I. O. and Okoro, C. C. (2006). Availability and utilization of internet among doctors in South-eastern Nigeria. *The Information Technologists,* 3 : (1), pp 1-8.

Prasad, H.N. (2000). Information needs and users. Pp1.

Tahir, M; Mahmood, K. and Shafique, F. (2008). Information needs and information-seeking behavior of arts and humanities teachers: A survey of the University of the Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. *Library Philosophy and Practice.* P1-2.

Ugwuanyi, C.F.; Okwor, R.N. and Ezeji, E.C. (2011). Library space and place: nature, use and impact on academic library. *International Journal of Library and Information Science.*3 : (5), p 92.

Uhuegbu, A.N. (2007). The information user: issues and themes. Whytem Publisher Nigeria. Owerri. P35.

Unegbu, M. C., Nwanekezie, N. (2014). Economics and marketing of information services and products. Cel-Bez Publisher. Owerri