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A Survey and Evaluation of Medical Libraries in Ekiti State, Nigeria (*Pp. 131-138*)

Fabunmi, Francis Adesoji - University Library, University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria

Folorunso, Olayinka - University Library, University of Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria
E-mail: yinka_janet@yahoo.com

Abstract

The paper takes a look at the medical libraries of selected health establishments in Ekiti State, Nigeria and critically examines the levels of fitness of these libraries in supporting the objectives of their parent bodies. The paper seeks to find out the extent to which the libraries satisfy the information needs of the health workers, patients and students. Questionnaires were designed for each category of the respondents and 50 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to each category. Also the researcher visited the selected libraries for on-the-spot assessment and conducted oral interviews with few respondents. Findings showed that medical libraries in Ekiti State have not been given the right priorities in the scheme of things as they are assessed to be in doldrums in term of funding and staffing. Recommendations capable of improving the situation were offered.

Introduction

Standard medical libraries capable of satisfying the health information needs of health workers, patients and students of the health institutions are, no doubt, *sine qua non* to having a healthy and therefore economically productive population. The pivotal aim of libraries and information centres is

primarily to support the objectives of their parent bodies. They are established to stand by their parent bodies and ensure that their parent bodies achieve their goals. Any libraries and information centres that failed in this regard has failed in general terms. For instance, a university library, as an academic library is established to primarily support teaching and learning processes and research activities which are ultimately the objectives of universities. It is therefore the role of a university library to satisfy the information needs of the students, lecturers and that of the other members of the global community. Logically, an institution or establishment is as poor or as rich and as good or as bad as the libraries attached to the institution (Ogunleye, 2000).

This confirms the usual practice during accreditation of academic programmes in tertiary institutions why the academic libraries are often the first places that the accreditation panel members visit for assessment of the institutions' academic programmes.

Ifidon and Ahiazu (2005) in their work on the ravaging wars in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria pointed out the dangers in having information gaps by having situations where libraries and information centres are not allowed to function and are therefore not functioning. They argued that when individuals' information needs are not properly satisfied, the ultimate results are confusion, illusion, sentiments, chaos and backwardness.

Fabunmi and Folorunso (2009) buttressing the above views posited that the vital roles that libraries and information centres play in national development cannot be over emphasized. They argued that before national development can be achieved and sustained, the various information needs of researchers and that of the entire citizenry must be satisfied. No meaningful research, discovery or invention can be achieved if the information needs of the researchers had not been initially satisfied and this satisfaction of information needs is the product of libraries, archives and information centres via information sources and proper dissemination of it either in conventional, digital or in virtual libraries.

In recognition of the very vital services that libraries and information centres render to other professions particularly in terms of provision of information and guidance, Ajibero (1993) proved that librarianship, the profession that actually owns and direct libraries and information centres, is the mother of all other professions and as well the promoter of scholarship and custodian of culture. The views above are in consonance with the goals of the professional

librarians in libraries and information centres, as the ones that search, select, filter, evaluate, organize and disseminate information in all other fields of human knowledge for national and intellectual development. Researches have revealed that no nation or human society can claim to have complete national development if copious reference is not made to the central and indispensable role that libraries and information centres play in satisfying the information needs of the entire citizenry (Fabunmi and Folorunso, 2009).

Brief History of Ekiti State, Nigeria

Ekiti –State of Nigeria was created on 1st October 1996 along-side other five by the Head of State and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, General Sani Abacha in a National Broadcast to mark the 36th Independence Anniversary of Nigeria. Ekiti State is therefore one of the thirty-six states including the Federal Capital Territory that constitute the Federal Republic of Nigeria. Ekiti State is situated entirely within the tropics. It is located between longitudes 4⁰ 45¹ to 5⁰ 45¹ East of Greenwich Meridian and Latitudes 7⁰ 15¹ to 8⁰ 5¹ North of Equator. By 1991 census results, Ekiti State population was 1,647,822 while the estimated population on creation on October 1, 1996 was put at 4,256,436 (Profile, 1996).

Medial Libraries and Information Centres

The first most comprehensive investigation regarding special libraries in Nigeria was conducted in 1970 by Professor (Mrs.) F.A Ogunsheye. This was in response to a request by UNESCO Regional Centre for Science and Technology for Africa (RSIA). It is evident that a special library was established in Nigeria as far back as 1900 by the Department of Agricultural Research.

Medical libraries along with law libraries, news libraries, corporate libraries and museum libraries which are often refer to as “information centres” are classified as special libraries. Therefore, special library is a sort of umbrella under which medical libraries are subsumed. Special libraries are viewed as a term for a library that is neither an academic nor school library, nor a public library (Cloonan, 2003).

Folorunso, (2007) reviewing Ogunleye (2000), Ajibero (2001), Oyegbaju (2006), Ashworth (1979) and Atkinson (1974) submitted that a special library is that kind of library purposely established to substantially quench the information thirst of specialized institution or bodies. Such specialized

institutions include hospitals, laboratories, court, law firm, agricultural firms, religious bodies, banks, museums etc.

Aniebo (2006) also reviewing submissions made by Madu and Adeniran (2005), Fasanya (1980) and Osundina (1976) posited that special libraries are libraries responsible for the acquisition and systematic organization of published (also unpublished) information materials directly concerned with and ancillary to the work of specialized institutions.

Adedigba (1992) gave four reasons for establishing special libraries as:

- i. meeting the needs for specialized information;
- ii. assisting the public libraries as they are unable to meet the specialized information needs of specialized bodies;
- iii. fulfilling the desire to have exclusive information within each organization, and
- iv. fulfilling the desire to have accurate and up to date information.

The few reasons above sufficiently suggest that special libraries, medical libraries inclusive, are exclusively in term of patronage, for the specialized institutions or having a genuine linkage(s) with the specialized institutions with the aim of satisfying the information needs of the users.

Results

The results of this study are presented in tables I-IV

Table 1 shows the selected medical establishments, their ownership, location and whether each of them owns a library or information centre or not. The table reveals that all the medical establishments are owned by Ekiti State government except the Federal Medical Centre, Ido –Ekiti that was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN). Only the Ministry of Health does not own a library at all.

Table II shows the staffing situation of the selected medical libraries in Ekiti State. It shows that the FMC and the SNM libraries have two staff each while the SHT library has three members of staff. Ministry of Health does not own a library and consequently has no library staff.

Table III shows the professional and academic qualifications of library staff in the selected medical libraries. One of the two staff in the FMC library has a first degree in librarianship and the other has a Higher National Diploma in

library and information studies. At the SNM and SHT libraries, the staffs are not trained librarians and have not gone for any kind of on the job or in-service training in the area of library and information studies.

Table IV shows the responses by the medical workers, students of the health institutions and patients as to whether their information needs are being satisfied by the medical libraries. Of the 50 medical workers that responded, only 09 representing 18% indicated that their information needs are partially satisfied while 41 or 82% indicated that they are not being satisfied at all. None of the health workers' information needs are fully satisfied. Also only 05 or 10% of the students said that they are partially satisfied, 45 or 90% indicated that they are not satisfied at all and none of them said they are fully satisfied. As well, 36% of patients that responded indicated that they are partially satisfied while 64% of them said they are not satisfied.

The table shows that 82%, 90% and 64% of the health workers, students and patients respectively indicated that their health information needs could not be satisfied by the services provided by the medical libraries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper emphasized the importance of medical libraries especially to members of community of the health institutions, namely, students, health workers and patients. Functional and healthy medical libraries had been linked to the satisfaction of information needs and consequently to the healthy living and well being of the students, health workers and patients. The conclusion reached is that healthy medical libraries, which are *sine qua non* to breeding healthy citizenry are in not-too-good conditions and that the medical libraries therefore need urgent resuscitation if the health information needs of the citizenry must be satisfied for healthy living. The recommendations are geared towards reviving the medical libraries and thereby adding to the value of good health service delivery to citizenry.

In view of the foregoing, it is recommended that:

- funding of medical libraries should be given priorities in the health sector during the annual budgetary allocation to the various units in the sector. This is necessary in view of observations of neglect of medical libraries over the years;
- co-operative attitude be encouraged among the neighbouring medical libraries in Ekiti State. This is necessary in view of the fact that hardly

can any library boast of being able to provide all her users needs, especially in this era of information explosion without recourse to the co-operative attitude either in form of inter-library loan or exchange of materials;

- qualified librarians be employed to replace the unqualified ones. A well equipped and automated medical library with unqualified staff is tantamount to putting a square peg in a round hole and to tea without sugar;
- the librarians to be employed to manage the medical libraries be well remunerated and with good conditions of service. This is a panacea to having such librarians from being “snatched” by neighbouring academic libraries;
- a Medical Library Commission (MLC) to oversee the affairs of medical libraries be established. This is essential in view of the importance of medical libraries to individual and national health and development. Medical libraries should henceforth be included as beneficiaries in the laws establishing Petroleum Technology Development Fund (PTDF);
- the medical libraries be digitized in line with the needs of the modern information age of virtual libraries. Librarians and other information professionals are also expected to embrace the new challenges posed by the Information Technology (IT) by going for relevant trainings, conferences and workshops from time to time;

Table I: Status And Profiles Of The Medical Establishments And Their Libraries.

S/N	MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENT	OWNERSHIP	HAVING LIBRARY?	LOCATION
1	Federal Medical Centre (FMC)	Federal Government	Yes	Ido-Ekiti
2	School of Nursing and Midwifery (SNM)	Ekiti State Government	Yes	Ado – Ekiti
3	School of Health Technology (SHT)	Ekiti State Government	Yes	Ijero – Ekiti
4	Ministry of Health (MH)	Ekiti State Government	Yes	Ado – Ekiti

Table II: Staffing Situation in the Medical Libraries

MEDICAL LIBRARIES	NO OF LIBRARY STAFF
Federal Medical Centre library	2
School of Nursing and Midwifery Library	2
School of Health Technology Library	3
Ministry of Health Library	NIL

Table III: Professional and Academic Qualifications of the Library Staff

PROFESSIONAL/ ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS	FMC LIBRARY	SNM LIBRARY	SHT LIBRARY	MH LIBRARY
Diploma in librarianship	1	-	-	-
First Degree in librarianship	1	-	-	-
Master Degree in Librarianship	-	-	-	-
Doctorate Degree in librarianship	-	-	-	-
Other qualifications	-	2	3	-

Legend: FMC –Federal Medical Centre

SNM – School of Nursing and Midwifery

SHT – School of Health Technology

MH – Ministry of Health.

Table IV: Satisfaction of Information Needs of Medical Workers, Students and Patients.

Levels of Satisfaction

CATEGORIES	FULLY	PARTIALLY	NOT SATISFIED
Health workers	-	09/18%	41/ 82%
Students	-	05/ 10%	45/ 90%
Patients	-	18/ 36%	32/ 64

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