

Management of Records of the Judicial Service Committee of the Federal Capital Territory Abuja

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Abstract

This study was carried out to evaluate the management of records of the judicial service committee of the federal capital territory Abuja. The research method employed for the study is a case study method. The instrument used for collecting data for this study was questionnaire. A set of questionnaire was constructed using closed ended questions and based on the research questions raised in the study. It was discovered that the major types of records that were generated in the committee were employee records and the records of the nominees for appointments. Record were mainly paper based and it was also discovered that records of nominees for judicial appointments were viewed as been the most useful in meeting the committee's aim and objectives. Management of records of the committee leaves a lot to be desired. . The committee should appreciate the importance of records management in their organization. Finally, the Committee should adopt the use of ICT'S in managing their records and archives.

Introduction

Records management is a specialized branch of document management that deals with information serving as evidence of an organization's business activities. Records management includes a set of recognized practices related to the life cycle of information, such as identifying, classifying, archiving, preserving and destroying records. The ISO 15489: (2001) standard defines it as "the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use and disposition of records, including the processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and Information about business activities and transactions in the form of records."

Every business or program must address well-defined objectives which will add value, either directly to the bottom line or toward the achievement of the organization's goals and objectives. Records management (RM) objectives usually fall into one of three categories

- i. Service (effective and efficient),
- ii. Profit (or cost-avoidance), and
- iii. Social (moral, ethical and legal) responsibility.

Records management programs must manage organizational information so that it is timely, accurate, complete, cost-effective, accessible and useable. Better information, at the right time, makes better business. The fundamental concept behind records management is the idea that each record has a life cycle; also the life cycle is based on the ideal that records become less important as time passes, Life cycle refers to the stages that every official business record must go through. After a record is created, it must be filed according to a defined, logical scheme into a managed repository where it will be available for retrieval by authorized users. When the information contained in records no longer has any immediate value, the record is removed from

active accessibility. Depending on the nature of the record, it is either retained, transferred, archived or destroyed.

According to the Records Management Bulletin (2002) the life cycle of records is an important concept in records management. It is a way of looking at how records are created and used. The life cycle is based on the idea that records become less important as time passes by,90 percent of the use of records takes place during the first 90 days after creation, this short period of high use is followed by a longer period of low use The records only need to be looked up occasionally during this second phase. Eventually, even this limited use will end and the records will have no further value to their creator. This process is known as the life cycle of a record. In other words, records have a life similar to that of a biological organism:

- a. It is born (creation phase)
- b. It lives (maintenance and use phase)
- c. It dies (disposition phase)

The practice of records management involves the following activities:

- i. Creating, approving and enforcing records policies, including a classification system and a records retention policy,
- ii. Developing a records storage plan, including the short- and long-term housing of physical records and digital information.
 - a. Identifying existing and newly created records, classifying and
 - b. Storing them according to standard operating procedures.
 - c. Coordinating access to and circulation of records within and outside the
 - d. Organization.

- e. Executing a retention policy to archive and destroy records according to the operational needs, operating procedures, statutes and regulations.

Judicial Service Committee of The Federal Capital territory, Abuja

The Judicial Service Committee of the Federal Capital Territory was first established by Decree No. 26 of 1986. It is now established under section 304 of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999. The Committee is autonomous; it has the Honorable Chief Judge of the Federal Capital Territory as its chairman, a Secretary that serves as head of its Secretariat and an Accounting Officer.

Composition and Functions of the Judicial Service Committee

Part 111 of the third Schedule to the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 set out the composition and functions of the committee as follows: The Judicial Service Committee of the Federal Capital territory shall comprise of the following members:

- The Chief Judge of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja who shall be the Chairman.
- The Attorney-General of the Federation:
- The Grand Khadi of the Sharia Court of Appeal of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja
- The President of the Customary Court of Appeal of FCT, Abuja. One person who is a Legal Practitioner and who has been qualified to practice as a Legal Practitioner, in Nigeria for a period of not less than twelve years.
- And one person, not being a Legal Practitioner, who in the opinion of the President is of unquestionable integrity.

The Committee shall have power; To recommend to the National Judicial Council suitable persons for nomination for the appointment to the office of:

- The Chief Judge of the Federal Capital Territory.
- A Judge of the High Court of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja,
- The Grand Khadi of the Sharia Court of Appeal

Statement of the Problem

The purpose and essence of record system is to obtain right information in the right place in the right format, at the right time for the right person at the lowest cost.

For this feat to be achieved, an integrated records management programme is needed (Baje, 1998), Enwere (1992) argues that the unintegrated records management programme in Nigerian public service has led to inefficiency in administration and to the loss or unavailability of vital information needed for decision-making. The Judicial Service Committee of FCT generates information to effectively perform its functions. More so, its different departments also generate information for the daily running of the Committee. For the information to be used effectively, it must be accurate and reliable. This calls for efficient information management and herein lays the role of records. It is based on the aforementioned that the research intends to carry out this study.

Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the Study:

1. To determine the types of records available in the Judicial Service Committee of the FCT.
2. To ascertain the types of records maintained by the Judicial Service Committee of FCT,
3. To ascertain how records are stored and retrieved in the Judicial Service Committee of the FCT.

LITERATURE SURVEY

The Concept of Records Lifecycle Management

A basic concept in Records Management is the records life cycle. The life of a record goes through phases starting from when it is created or received by the Agency, through to its use, maintenance and temporary storage before finally being destroyed or archived permanently. Some of the stages are explained below;

The first phase of the Records Life Cycle involves records being created, collected or received through the daily transactions of the Business, School, Preschool or Regional Office and can include printed reports, emails or even phone messages, documents that detail the functions, policies, decisions or procedures of the agency. The next phase of the life cycle is the maintenance and use of the record. This includes filing, retrieving, use, duplication, printing, dissemination, release or exchange of the information in the record. At the disposition phase, records are assessed to determine their retention value using General Disposal Schedules or Records Disposal Schedules. This leads to records being retained permanently or indefinitely or being subjected to destruction if the records have no value for further use. When a record has been determined to be of permanent value to the Agency and/or Community

then it is transferred a specialized agency charged with such responsibility such as that of the State Records of South Australia for permanent archiving and preservation. If on the other hand, a record still has ongoing value to the Agency it will be temporarily stored either onsite at the Agency or offsite with an Approved Service Provider. When the retention date of these records is reached, permission will be sought from the Agency and State Records for their destruction.

Mike (2004) observed that records life-cycle management comprises of policies, processes, practices, services and tools used to align the value of information with the most appropriate and cost effective infrastructure from the time information is created through to its final disposition. He summarized records life-cycle into five (5) phases as creation, distribution, use, maintenance and disposition. Creation deals with information from its points of origination. Distribution is the process of managing information; it includes both internal and external distributions. Use takes place after records are distributed internally and can generate decisions, documents and actions or serve other purpose; maintenance is the management of information. This includes processes such as storing, retrieval and transfer. Disposition is the practice of handling information that is less frequently accessed or has met its assigned retention period. However, there appear to be no consensus on the number of stages or processes involved in the life-cycle of information.

Methodology

The research method adopted for this study is a case study method. A case study method according to Mohammed (2005) aims at gathering data and information from already occurred events or existing phenomenon. This method was chosen for the study because a holistic and detailed solution is sort for the information management problems of the areas of study. The population of the study consists of the two hundred and twenty two(220) members of staff of the Judicial Service Committee of Federal Capital Territory. The sampling technique used in this work is the Purposive Technique, and it was used because of the diverse nature of the area of study. The Committee has different departments that generate records and these departments have specific people that create and manage these records.

The instrument used for collecting data in this study is questionnaire. A set of questionnaire was constructed using closed ended questions based on the research questions raised in the study. This type of questionnaires was used to enable the researcher obtain

reliable information necessary for this study. Since Close Ended Questionnaire, according to Czaja and Blair (2005) have the advantage of eliciting the desired responses in Judicial Service Committee of FCT Abuja. The researcher believes that the questionnaire will provide the data required for the study. Data was collected by the researchers personally. Out of the total of 220 questionnaires that were administered 198 were duly filled and returned to the researchers. This constitutes a response rate of 90% The high response rate is attributed to the fact that the researchers collected data over a period of three weeks, giving each respondent enough time to answer the questionnaire.

Types of Records in Judicial Service Committee of FCT, Abuja

This question sought to find out the various types of Records that are generated in the Judicial Service Committee of the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Checklist of records of the Committee was designed to enable the researchers find out what records are available.

Table 1:Types of Records Available in Judicial Service Committee FCT Abuja

Types of Records Available	Simple Count of Records
Court case Records	25
Employee Records	56
Courts in Abuja	15
Records of persons nominated for any judicial Position	78
Other records	24
Total	198

Table 1 above revealed the types of records available to the Committee and it shows that records of nominees to judicial positions accounts for the majority, while the records of Courts in Abuja with 15 was the least types of records available, It could be deduced therefore that since records of nominees to Judicial Positions is one of the major records of the Committee, it only follows that this record will be paramount on the list of records generated by the Committee.

Records Generation

The second question sought to find out how the records of the committee are generated, the breakdown of responses is shown in the table 2 below.

Table 2: Records Generation in Judicial Service Committee of FCT Abuja

Generation Method	Frequency	%
Filling of Forms	98	49,5%
Data Entry	34	17.2%
E-mail	16	8.1%
Minutes of meetings	40	20.2%
Digital Scanning/Photography	10	5%
Total	198	100%

Table 2 above revealed that forms are the major records generated in the Committee with 98 (49,5%) of responses. This indicates that forms are extensively used to create records in the Committee. The table also revealed that minutes of meetings with 40 (20.2%) of the responses was next in line, while data entry, E-mails and Digital Scanning and photography accounted for 34 (17.2%), 36 (8.1%) and 10 (5%) respectively. This indicates that the Committee has embraced the use forms in the generation of records.

Format of Records

The format of records influences to a large extent records management in the 21' century. It determines how fast and who gets access to records when they are needed. Table 3 shows the responses as to the format of records of Committee-

Table 3: Format of Records in Judicial Service Committee of FCT Abuja

Format	Frequency	Percentage
Paper	154	77,8%
Electronic	30	15,2%
Both paper and	14	7%
Total	198	100%

Table .3 above revealed that Paper format still continues to be the format of records of the committee as it accounted for 154(77.8%) of responses. 30 (25.2%) of the respondents agreed to electronic Format while 14 (7%) of the respondents agreed to the existence of both paper and electronic formats. Necessary preparations are to be made to ensure that full advantage can be taken of the use of electronic systems in the management of records of the committee in all the phases of records life cycle,

Record Keeping Systems

The way the organization keeps records will determine to a large extent their management practices, so respondents were asked about their record keeping system; table 4.3.4 captured the analysis of their responses.

Table 4: Record Keeping System in Judicial

System	Frequency	Percentage
Filling Rooms	120	60.6%
Ill-House Databases	20	9.8
Organized File Structures	48	24.2
Others	10	5.1
Total	198	100%

Table 4 revealed that most of the respondents agreed to filing rooms 120(60.6%) as been their record keeping system, in-house databases accounted for 20(9.8%) of the responses, organized file structure accounted for 48(24.2%) of the responses, while other forms of record keeping such as the use of computers accounted for 10(5.1%) of the responses. The implication of this finding is that the extent of the application of computers and other electronic systems in managing records by the Committee is low. Secondly, registry or filing room systems deals more with paper based or manual records management with the challenges of being disaster prone and loss of vital records when they occur

Organization of records

Responses were sort from the respondents on the way records are organized in the Committee.

Table 5: Organization of Records in Judicial Service Committee of FCT Abuja

Method	Frequency	Percentage
Alphabetical order	100	50.5%
Numerical Order	60	30.3%
Subject	30	15.1%
Title	8	4.1%

From table 5 above, alphabetical order recorded 100(50.5%) of the responses. Numerical order 60(30.3%) of the responses, subject 30(15.1%), while title recorded 8(4.1%) of the responses. Alphabetical order recorded the highest response because most of the records of the Committee are records of individuals nominated for appointments to judicial positions. With the passage of time, specialist in record management will provide guidance on how specific records are to be managed since it noticed silently that the services of professional records are still yet to be sought by the Committee a situation not desirable in the modern information society

Accessibility to Records

Respondents were asked on the way they get access to records; items were provided for them to tick from. Table 6 represents their responses.

Table 6: Accessibility to Records in Judicial Service Committee of FCT Abuja

Method	Frequency	Percentage
Computer	30	15.1
Library/Information unit	60	30.3
Meetings	30	15.1
Registry	78	39.4
Total	198	100%

From table 6 above, computer accounted for 30(15.1%) of the responses, Library/Information Unit 60(30.3%) of the response, meetings 30(15.1%) of the responses, registry 78(39.4%) of the responses. It shows that records are accessed through the Registry and the Library/Information Unit. This finding clearly indicate that the Committee does use computers and other electronic systems such as scanners, photocopiers extensively in the management of their records

Record Retention Schedule

Respondents were asked if there exists retention schedule in the Committee, the table below capture their responses.

Table 7: Record Retention Scheme in Judicial Service Committee of FCT Abuja

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	78	39.4
No	120	60.6
Total	198	100%

From the table above, 120(60.6%) of the respondents chose no, while 78(39.4%) agreed to the existence of a retention schedule. It can be deduced from this finding that records management is yet to receive an appreciable attention commensurate with the enormous responsibility of the Committee at federal level of judicial service. Without retention schedule there no guide to retention activities and so every does or applies what he/she feels should apply thus leading chaos in scheduling

Storage of records

Respondents were asked on the way records are stored in the Committee and their responses are captured in the table below:

Table 8 Storage of Record in Judicial Service Committee of FCT Abuja

Method	Frequency	Percentage
File Cabinets	78	39.4%
Computers	60	30.3%
Shelves	30	15.1%
CD/DVD	30	15.1%
Total	198	100%

From table 8 above, file cabinets accounted for 78(39.4%) of the responses. Computers had 60(30.3%) while Shelves had 30(15.1%) of the responses, CD/DVD accounted for 30(15.1%) of the responses. This finding shows that majority of the records of the Committee are stored in manual systems characterized with use of file cabinets and shelves .Further assessment of the data on table 8 indicate the pattern and direction that records management will take in course of the Committee work which is electronic records management

Records Management Strategy

Responses were sort from respondents on records management strategy used in the committee. Table 9 captured their responses.

Table 9: Records Management Strategy in Judicial Service Committee of FCT Abuja

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Daily Filing	78	39.4%
Archiving	60	30.3%
Occasional Weeding	30	15.1%
Preservation	30	15.1%
Total	198	100%

From table 9 above, it can be seen that daily filing recorded 78(39.4%) of the responses. Archiving 60(30.3%) of the responses, Occasional Weeding 30(15.1%) of the responses, while Preservation accounted for 30(15.1%)this finding indicates the frequency/ records management which is daily filing of records as they are created, removed from storage for consultation, and after being for the purpose of taking by members of the Committee

Conclusion

The records management strategies of the committee leave a lot to desired. The committee should appreciate records management because of the nature of the work that they do which demands the extensive use of records. The adoption of ICTs in managing records and archives has been totally seen as a necessity due to the nature of records it generates, the accumulated records generated. Similarly, the shift from traditional information environment to digital or electronic environment informed the need for records and archives generation, accessibility, and management to be done electronically as a modern trend for effective operation and management of organizational responsibility.

Recommendations

From the research findings, the researchers made the following recommendations,

- a. There is a need for the adoption of ICTs in records and archives management so as to keep abreast with modern trends and practices in the world of information.
- b. Personnel should be trained on best ICT practices and handling through seminars, workshops, and regular lectures [in-service training],
- c. Provisions should be made for alternative power supply to supplement PHCN to avoid

interruption during work as most ICT facilities operates with power.

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