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USE OF GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS IN REDEEMER'S UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

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Abstract

The study investigates the use of government documents in the Redeemer's University library. Statistics kept in the unit were used to elicit information on the users of the collection. The study reveals that majority of the patrons who use government documents are students and staff of the college of management sciences. The study shows that patrons use the collection for various purposes but the most purpose for which majority of clients use them is research. It was revealed that daily newspapers are the most frequently consulted materials and are most used by users from the college of management sciences. Comments of patrons from records kept in the documents unit reveal that the collections adequately meet the users' information needs. Recommendations were made based on the conclusion drawn.

Introduction

According to LSU Libraries (2008) "government documents" is a catchall term for any and all information produced by any government agency. "Although the term usually refers to documents produced by federal government, state and local governments, international organizations and agencies also issue documents. The author adds that the word "document" is actually misleading, since government documents come in a variety of forms. Books, pamphlets, posters, periodicals, and online databases are all government documents if they are produced by a government agency. To Aina (2004) Knowledge of use of government documents is an important part of professional management in libraries. Users' interest in various types of government documents is of importance to them as well as to documents librarians. Libraries acquire a variety of government publications and make them accessible to users. These publications contained information on government day to day activities and functions. Government documents form a considerable portion of libraries' collections most especially in academic libraries due to the important information on government activities and programmes which they contained. Among librarians, government documents have a reputation for being a valuable but underused resource. Brunvand (2008) argues that a literature review of

undergraduate citation studies reveals that the use of government information has apparently increased so much for some subject areas that, after books and journals, it has become one of the most frequently used sources of primary and scholarly work.

A citation analysis of government information in 194 bibliographies from an undergraduate information literacy course provides insights about how students find and use government information and suggest strategies for integrating government information into standard library instruction. Enumerating some of the usefulness of government documents, Pampam (1981) maintained that they are tools for awareness of government activities and a source of enlightenment for the researchers and the elites, because they constitute primary source materials in the history of government administration and activities; they contain accounts of the work of government agencies; give a statistical picture of national conditions and afford bases for measuring economic and social changes.

Asher (2002) notes that findings from an analysis of printed data in the Walter Stiern Library at California State University, Bakersfield, revealed that government documents accounted for about 5% of the total materials printed. His study indicated that students are neglecting important materials in their research and that instructors needed to further incorporate the use of government publications into their course requirement. The literature has revealed that:

- ◆ Government publications and allied materials have a place in academic libraries collection
- ◆ Government publications contain information that can update users in the areas of government activities, including statistical information that are relevant to academic work and research.
- ◆ Students have not appreciated the importance of government documents as a source of vital information.
- ◆ Lecturers need to encourage students to use government publications to support academic work and research.

This article will focus on the usage of government documents and other materials which are in the documents unit of Redeemer's University library.

Background

Redeemer's University is one of the approved private universities in Nigeria, and commenced academic activities in 2005 with three colleges, namely: Colleges of Humanities, Management Sciences and Natural Sciences. Among private universities in Nigeria, Redeemer's University was established out of the desire of the Redeemed Christian Church of God to make input into university education in the country having realized the role university education can play in the social and technological development of a nation.

The parent body of this university not only thought of establishing a private university to provide for additional places to absorb the growing student population in the country but to also considerably improve upon the existing standard of

teaching and learning in the universities. The proposal to establish Redeemer's University is therefore a notable effort towards producing the requisite high level manpower required for the development of the nation.

Having fulfilled all the National Universities Commission (NUC) criteria for establishing a private university in the country, the Federal Government granted an operating license to the Redeemer's University on Friday 7th January, 2005. The University took off in September, 2005, Four hundred and seventy-three (473) pioneer students matriculated into the colleges to pursue bachelor degrees in various programmes.

The University Library came into being when the parent institution received its license to operate. It is rich in current literature in the Natural Sciences, Management Sciences and Humanities. There are current journals both foreign and local. The collection also includes non-print materials and government documents which is the main focus of this study.

Documents Collection

The documents unit of RUN library was created in December 2007 and became operational January, 2008 with a few government documents, back issues of magazines, Newspapers, local and international organizations' publications. The unit has however grown and has a large collection of government documents. The collection consists of the following:

Government Documents

- ◆ Gazettes (federal & state)
- ◆ Government Annual Budgets and Estimates
- ◆ Federal Government Acts
- ◆ Nigerian Constitutions and Allied Publications
- ◆ Publications of International Organizations
- ◆ Annual Reports of ministries, parastatals and organizations and financial Institutions
- ◆ Annual Abstracts of Statistics
- ◆ Statistical Reports

Nigerian Newspapers

- ◆ The Nation
- ◆ The Punch
- ◆ The Nigerian Tribune
- ◆ The Guardian

News Magazines

- ◆ Tell
- ◆ Time

Students' Projects

Projects of past students from all departments of Redeemer's University

Realizing the importance of government documents for research, the

documents unit of Redeemer's University Library has continued with its goal of making the federal, state, local and foreign government publications available for use by scholars and researchers. Publications of international organizations are also made available for use.

The documents unit is opened to users between the hours of 9 a.m. and 10 p.m. on Weekdays. The materials are only consulted within the unit for safety purposes. Materials may however be taken out for the purpose of photocopying with permission of the staff in charge. The documents collections are separate from other library collections. Materials in this unit are classified using a locally made classification scheme called 'Harmonized Classification for Nigerian Government and International Organizations' Publication' issued by the National Library of Nigeria. The reason for adopting this scheme instead of the Library of Congress classification scheme is that the latter Scheme makes no adequate provision for such materials. Though the Scheme is reviewed from time to time, it is still not adequate for the government documents published in Nigeria.

Objective of the study

The study is aimed at evaluating the use of government documents in Redeemer's University library by using statistics and records kept in the unit. The study seeks to examine the under listed

- ◆ Usefulness of the government documents
- ◆ Determine those who use government documents
- ◆ Examine the type of materials they use most
- ◆ Determine the purpose of using the materials
- ◆ Evaluate users' satisfaction of the collection

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was content analysis. Stemler (2001) defines content analysis as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding.

The data used for this study are based on statistics taken and kept in the Documents Unit of Redeemer's University library for the past two years. The data were used to analyse the activities of the Documents section of the library especially the ones that have to do with users categories, types of materials used, purpose of use and users' comments for 2008/2009 - 2010 academic years. A guide was designed to capture the necessary data for the study. The data captured include: name of user, department of user, status of user, type of material used, purpose of use and user's comment. It is the practice of the Redeemer's University Library to keep statistics of usage of its collection. The data captured were analyzed and their results were used for drawing conclusion for the study

Table 1: Breakdown of Users to College

College	2008/2009				2009/2010			
	No of Rese-archer	%	No of Stud-ents	%	No of Rese-archer	%	No of Stud-ents	%
Management Sciences	17	100	161	80.5	1	100	121	84.0
Humanities	0	0	16	8.0	0	0	14	9.7
Natural Sciences	0	0	23	11.5	0	0	9	6.3
Total	17	100	200	92.2	1	100	144	100

The table above showed that in 2008/2009 academic session, a total of 217 patrons used the documents. Of the 217 patrons, 17 (7.8) were staff and 200 (92.2) were students from the Colleges of Management Sciences, Natural Sciences and Humanities. While in 2009/2010, a total of 145 patrons used the documents. Of this number, 1 was a staff (researcher) and the remaining were students from the Colleges of Management Sciences, Humanities and Natural Sciences. From the table, it is revealed that majority of the users of government documents are students from the College of Management Sciences. This is attributed to the fact that students in the department of Economics, Accounting, Marketing, Banking and Finance, Actuarial Science and Mass Communication which are all in the College of Management Sciences are usually given assignments which require them using the collection. The table also revealed that staff (researchers) of the College of Humanities and Natural Sciences do not use the documents. This therefore suggests that the opinion of the staff of the Colleges of Humanities and Natural Sciences should be sought so as to know their area of interest and incorporate same in the documents acquisition policy.

Table 2: Documents Type Used by the College of Management Sciences

Documents	2008/2009		2009/2010	
	No of User	%	No of User	%
Gazette	7	4.1	10	6.9
Government Annual Budgets and Estimates	12	7.0	14	9.7
Federal Government Acts	19	11.1	16	11.0
Nigerian Constitution and Allied Publications	20	11.7	15	10.3
Publications of International Organizations	13	7.6	11	7.6
Annual Reports of ministries, parastatals and organizations	15	8.8	12	8.3
Annual Abstracts of Statistics	15	8.8	17	11.7
Statistical Reports	18	10.5	13	9.0
Nigerian dailies	28	16.4	24	16.6
Magazine	8	4.7	6	4.1
Research Report / Monographs	16	9.4	7	4.8
Total	171	100	145	100

From the table above, Nigerian dailies constitutes the highest number of document used in both 2008/2009 and 2009/2010. Twenty eight (16.4%) of 171 (100.1%) patrons who consulted the documents in 2008/2009 used the Nigerian dailies while 24 (16.6%) of the 145 (100%) users in 2009/2010 also used Nigerian dailies. This indicated that Nigerian dailies are the most used of the documents by users in the College of Management Sciences.

Table 3: A breakdown of users in College of Management Sciences Department

Department	2008/2009		2009/2010	
	No of User	%	No of User	%
Banking and Finance	15	8.7	7	5.8
Actuarial Science	5	2.9	0	0
Insurance	0	0	0	0
Economics	28	16.4	31	25.8
Business Administration	9	5.3	10	8.3
Marketing	9	5.3	5	4.2
Political Science	23	13.5	3	2.5
Sociology	6	3.5	1	0.8
Social Works	0	0	0	0
Psychology	6	3.5	18	15.0
Mass Communication	60	35.9	24	20.0
Tourism management	3	1.7	8	6.7
Transport and Logistics	0	0	0	0
Accounting	7	9.9	13	10.8
Total	171	100.1	120	99.9

Table 3 above gives a breakdown of users in the College of Management Sciences to departments for the period covered in this study. The table shows that users from the department of Mass Communication constitute the highest number. Out of the 171 (100.1%) users who used documents in 2008/2009, 60 (35.9%) were from the department of Mass Communication. This also is applicable in 2009/2010 where 120 (99.9%) was the total number of users out of which; the department of Mass Communication had 24 (20.0%). The result therefore shows that, users from the department of Mass Communication used the documents most in 2008/2009 and 2009/2010. Of the departments in the College of Management Sciences, Mass Communication Department constitutes the highest number of patronage

Table 4: Breakdown of Users in the College of Natural Sciences Departments

Department	2008/2009		2009/2010	
	No of User	%	No of User	%
Microbiology	5	38.5	1	67
Biology	1	7.7	0	0
Zoology	0	0	0	0
Plant Biology	0	0	0	0
Industrial Mathematics	3	23	3	20.0

Computer Science	2	15.4	8	53.3
Physic and Electronics	0	0	0	0
Biochemistry	0	0	3	20.0
Industrial Chemistry	0	0	0	0
Chemistry	2	15.4	0	0
Total	13	100.8	15	100

Data in table 4 above indicate that in 2008/2009 only 13 (100) patrons used the documents in the College of Natural Sciences. Of this number, 5 (38.5%) were of the Department of Microbiology, 3 (23) were from Industrial Mathematics, 2 (15.4%) from Computer science and Chemistry respectively, while the rest departments did not use the documents. In 2009/2010, however, the number of usage increased from 13 (100) to 15 (100) out of which 8 (53.3%) were from the Department of Computer Science. From the table, it shows that only a hand full of clients use the collection in the College of Natural Sciences

Table 5: Breakdown of Users in the College of Humanities by Departments

Department	2008/2009		2009/2010	
	No of User	%	No of User	%
English	25	75.8	4	40.0
Theatre Arts	0	0	1	10.0
History and International Relations	8	24.2	5	50.0
Total	33	100	10	100.0

Table 5 displays the categories of users in College of Humanities by Department. As indicated in the table, 33 (100) users from the College of Humanities used the documents in 2008/2009. Of the 33 users, 25 (75.8%) were from the Department of English Language while 8 (24.2%) were from the Department of History and International Relations but no user was from the Department of Theatre Arts. In 2009/2010, only 10 clients used the documents. Of the 10 users, 5 (50.0%) were from the Department of History and International Relations, 4 (40%) from English language. The result therefore shows that majority of those who use the documents in the College of Humanities are from the Department of English Language.

Table 6: Breakdown of Users by Status

Category of User	2008/2009		2009/2010	
	No of User	%	No User	%
Student	200	92.2	144	99.31
Researcher	17	7.8	1	0.69
Total	217	100	145	100

The table above shows that, of the 217 (100%) patrons who consulted the materials in 2008/2009, 200 (92.2%) were students while the remaining 17 (7.8%) were researchers. Students also constituted the higher number in 2009/2010 where

144 (99.31%) of the 145 (100%) patrons who used the materials were students. This revealed that students use more of documents than researchers in the documents unit of Redeemer's University library.

Category of Documents

Eleven categories of documents were used in determining the type of government documents consulted. The categories were:

- ◆ Gazette
- ◆ Government Annual Budgets and Estimates
- ◆ Federal Government Acts
- ◆ Nigerian Constitutions and Allied Publications
- ◆ Publications of International Organizations
- ◆ Annual Reports of ministries, parastatals and organizations
- ◆ Annual Abstracts of Statistics
- ◆ Statistical Reports
- ◆ Nigerian Dailies
- ◆ Magazines

Table 7 indicates the categories of documents and number of times each was consulted for the period covered by this study.

Table 7: Category of Documents Consulted

Category of Documents	2008/2009		2009/2010	
	No. of Vols.	%	No. of Vols.	%
Gazette	15	6.9	9	6.2
Government Annual Budgets and Estimates	22	10.1	16	11.0
Federal Government Acts	13	6	8	5.5
Nigerian Constitution and Allied Publications	19	8.8	10	6.9
Publications of International Organizations	19	8.8	18	12.4
Annual Reports of ministries, parastatals and organizations	16	7.4	11	7.6
Annual Abstracts of Statistics	28	12.9	16	11.0
Statistical Reports	19	8.8	11	7.6
Nigerian dailies	40	18.4	25	17.2
Magazine	5	2.3	8	5.5
Research Report / Monographs	21	9.7	13	8.9
Total	217	99.5	145	100

Data in table 7 above shows that the Nigerian dailies are the most consulted documents. Of the 217 users who consulted the documents in 2008/2009, 40 (18.4%) used Nigerian dailies, 25 (17.2%) out of 145 (99.5%) used them in

2009/2010. The reason for the high record of usage of newspapers could be deduced from the fact that they usually contain information relating to economic, social, cultural as well as government activities of a nation.

Of the other materials consulted, annual abstracts of statistics had 28 (12.9%) and government annual budget had 22 (10.1%). These materials were consulted either for research or to write assignment

Table 8: Purpose of Using the Collection

Purpose	2008/2009		2009/2010	
	No.	%	No.	%
Research	100	46.8	91	62.7
News	62	28.6	30	7
Assignment	55	25.6	24	16.6
Total	217	100	145	100

Statistics kept in the unit revealed that there are varieties of purpose for which the documents are used. However, the main reason why students and researchers use documents was for research. Of the 217 (100%) clients who used the collection in 2008/2009, 100 (58.5%) indicated that they used them for research purposes. As indicated in the table, in 2009/2010, 145 (100%) users used the collection, of which 91 (44.9%) said they used them for research purpose.

Table 9: Users' Satisfaction

Remarks	2008/2009		2009/2010	
	No of Comment	%	No of Comment	%
Satisfactory	196	90.3	100	69
Unsatisfactory	11	5.1	0	0
Undecided	10	4.6	45	31.0
Total	217	100	145	100

Of the 217 users who used the collection in 2008/2009, 196 (90.3%) indicated that they were satisfied with the collection. In 2009/2010, 100 (69) of the 145 (100) clients who used the documents said they were satisfied with them. It therefore shows that majority of the users always have their needs met.

Conclusion and recommendations

This study was carried out to examine the use of documents in the documents unit of Redeemer's University library. The study investigated the usefulness of the documents, category of users, type of materials consulted, purpose of use of materials and users' satisfaction with the collection. Data used for the study were obtained from the records kept in the unit. The result of the study revealed that the collection is mostly consulted for the purpose of research and Nigerian dailies constitute the highest number of usage.

Little research has been carried out to determine the extend to which government documents are used according to Johnson (1999). Therefore, acquisition and use of government documents should be of concern to librarians. The researcher wish to recommend that:

- ◆ Documents Librarians in University Libraries should ensure that government publications are acquired regularly to avail users of the information they contain
- ◆ The management of the Redeemer's University Library should ask for input from the colleges, particularly the College of Natural Sciences, of the documents that would be of interest to them.
- ◆ The user community should be adequately informed of what materials are available on the library website.
- ◆ The management of Redeemer's University Library should endeavor to seek the opinion of users as to how the unit could further be improved
- ◆ The management of the library should intensify effort in the provision of additional Nigerian dailies such as the Daily Independent, Vanguard, and This Day so as to adequately meet the information needs of users.
- ◆ Students should be sensitized to the importance and type of materials in the unit during library orientation and how they can use the materials for assignment and research work

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