

INFORMATION RESOURCES AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY NATIONAL METALLURGICAL DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (NMDC) LIBRARY, JOS

ABUBAKAR MOHAMMED BITAGI, CLN

Library Services Department
Federal University of Technology, Minna, Nigeria
E-mail: bitagi2006@yahoo.com.
Phone No. 08036810242

Abstract

This article started by exploring into the historical base of NMDC. Although the nucleus of the Centre started in 1972, it was only fully backed by a Federal Government decree No. 50 in 1992. The decree spelt out the objectives expected of the Centre. The most important objective of the Centre is to undertake applied research into various branches of metallurgy to the extent that the quality of Nigerian ores and materials are upgraded for iron and steel production. To fully realize its objectives, a library was established to provide researchers with adequate, current and relevant information resources and services. This study seeks to show the extent to which the library has met its objectives. In that direction, therefore, a set of questionnaire was administered among 40 (80%) of the sample population of scientists using the Library. Interview and personal observation were also used as methods of gathering data. Data obtained were presented in a Linkert type of presentation in tables with frequencies and percentages. The findings showed that information resources and services provision by the library did not adequately meet the need for which it was initially established. The Centre's management's lackadaisical attitude toward library development, insufficient number of qualified staff and lack of ICT facilities, among others, are identified, as the militating factors in the provision of information resources and services. As a way forward, the study concluded that the identified lapses be rectified.

Key words: Information Resources, Information Services, Special Libraries, Case Study.

I. INTRODUCTION

Special libraries such as that of National Metallurgical Development Centre (NMDC) are established in response to the transformation needs and expanding expectations from their parent organizations. In view of this, they need to provide adequate and relevant information resources for their specialist users. Information resources, according to Ikhizama (2004:11) are "materials consulted for aid of information on a topic theme etc". These, according to Ikhizama include: "books, journals, reference materials, audiovisuals and computer based resources (e-resources). For the purpose of clarity, Oyedokun (2007:44) classified these information sources into three distinct categories: which are "primary, secondary, and tertiary" sources of information. The primary sources are the most current, uninterpreted, and firsthand materials, such as scientific journal articles, diaries, memoirs, statistical data, theses, technical reports and the likes.

Secondary and tertiary sources of information are said to be built from primary sources. They include: publications such as textbooks, dictionaries, encyclopedias, handbooks, directories, bibliographies, indexes, and abstracts, library catalogues, almanacs, newspapers and a host of others. The fact is, however, that what constitute a secondary source for one professional may be a tertiary source for the other and vice versa. At any given point in time, special libraries of NMDC standing should have in stock all forms of current and relevant information sources.

The major yardstick for measuring the success of any special library include the quantity, relevance, currency of its stock and the capability of its professionals to offer needed information there from. Although the quantity of the stock is most of the time determined by the objectives of the parent organization and the amount devoted for library development, it is apparent at any given time that researchers should have access to necessary information

resources to work with. This is so because there is the need to strictly achieve the objectives for which research institutions are established, and their ability to compete favourably with others in research output and production at national and international levels. To achieve these onerous tasks, current and relevant information is top most in the need of researchers. Information is an assemblage of data in a comprehensive form capable of communication, and this has no doubt been playing a leading role in the development and modernization of the human society (Echezona, 2005:19). As such, librarians and information professionals, as a matter of priority, need to provide information services from the library stock to the researchers with a view to the attainment of their research objectives. It is in that direction that Loeb in Lawani (1974) and cited by Bitagi (1994) when emphasizing the role of special libraries in attaining research objective argued that:

We imagine that it is in the laboratory that man discovers new truth and that if we can only provide well equipped laboratories, important truth will soon be discovered. This is not the case. Real discoveries are actually made in the library and subsequently tested out in the laboratory. A new discovery is a new combination of old ideas, and these ideas are most likely to occur to the mind of the scientist, not when he is handling material things, but when he is brooding over the thought of other men and rethinking them himself. In these hours of profound reflection, the new combination may occur to him and he goes to his laboratory to verify or disprove. The library remains the great essential (source) to discovery (p. 5 and 6).

From the above, it can be postulated that the success of any research institution depends to a large scale, the amount of information resources and services provided to the researchers by the special library established to facilitate the attainment of the objectives for which the parent institution is established.

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The National Metallurgical Development Centre (NMDC), Jos, is an off shoot of the now dissolved Nigerian Steel Development Authority (NSDA). According to *NMDC News Bulletin* (1992:3), "the Centre was established in 1972 as the NSDA materials testing laboratory but later metamorphosed to Metallurgical Research and Test Division". Not long after that, it was renamed the National Steel Council (NSC). The NSC was backed by Decree No. 60 of 1979 which also repealed the NSDA Decree. The name "National Metallurgical Development Centre" was subsequently adopted in 1987 (*NMDC News Bulletin*, 1992:3) and backed by decree No. 50 of 27th September, 1992.

The specific objectives for which the NMDC was established, as spelt out in the Decree are:

To undertake applied research in various branches of metallurgy to the extent that the qualities of Nigerian ores and materials are upgraded for iron and steel production thereby eliminating their importation; improving the performance of the processes used in iron and steel making; application of scientific knowledge to the solution of problems of practical interests in steel production, fabrication and use; and providing indigenous skilled know-how in those areas where dependence on foreign assistance had been necessary.

It is in the light of the above multifaceted objectives that NMDC felt that the establishment of a well-equipped and centralized information service system is necessary for its researchers to make the best use of their time and talent in achieving the centre's prescribed roles (Bitagi, 1994:3). In the opinion of Silva (1970:7)

"modern society is characterized by an increasing need for specialized institutions in various fields of activity (and) for the performance of their day to day functions as well as research and consultancy work, these institutions require access to published

information”.

The author concluded that:

“the unit responsible for the acquisition, processing, storing and dissemination of published information directly concerned with, and ancillary to the work of a specialized institution (such as NMDC) may be defined as a special library”.

Since the establishment of NMDC library, it is expected that it would have undergone various forms of development in terms of resources and services provision to the scientists. The extent to which such development has taken place is the subject of this research.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

NMDC library was established to provide information resources and services to facilitate the attainment of the objectives for which the centre was established. For example, Goni (1991:2) pointed out that the NMDC library was established to “select, acquire, organize in a useful order and preserve materials in the form of text and reference books, journals and audio-visual equipment that have relevance to the research activities of the Centre”. He further stated that “it is also charged with the responsibility of dissemination of information from such materials to researchers in aid of efficient performance of their duties”. To measure the success of NMDC library in achieving the roles for which it was established, the quantity, relevance, currency of its stock and the capability of the staff in providing the desired information services need to be assessed from time to time. This has become necessary so as to achieve the objectives for which the parent organization, NMDC, was established for. Preliminary investigation by this researcher reveals that the expected functions of the library are not fully performed by NMDC library at the present. The reasons why the library is not performing up to expectations constitutes an information gap which this research is designed to unravel.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The broad objective for which this study is

carried out is to evaluate the type of information resources that are available and services provided by NMDC library, Jos. The specific objectives are to:

1. Find out the extent to which research users rate the adequacy, currency and relevance of information resources available in NMDC library as to their research needs.
2. Determine the extent to which research users rate the information services provided by NMDC library as valuable to their needs.
3. Find out the factors militating against the provision of information resources and services by the library.
4. Extrapolate the way forward in the provision of information resources and services.

V. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study was carried out to specifically re-emphasize the need for NMDC management, in particular and those of other specialized institutions/agencies in Nigeria generally, to equip their libraries with current and relevant information resources and services as initially envisaged so as to facilitate the attainment of desired objectives.

The study will also serve as a reference material on the evaluation of the type of information resources and services provided by the libraries of specialized institutions/ agencies in Nigeria.

VI. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Information resources, in the context of this study, are the tools upon which information services are based and provided by librarians. Uyhili (1986) identified three categories of resources necessary for any special library. These, according to the Uyhili are “physical facilities” such as library building itself, shelves, tables and chairs, etc., “Staff” consisting of librarians and other staff; and “information resources” which constitute materials or equipment on which information are recorded, stored, retrieved, and disseminated. This study is basically concerned

with the latter category information resources.

Attama (2010:14) itemized information resources to include: "books, journals, reference materials, newspapers, magazines, audio-visual (AV) materials as well as modern Information Technology (IT) facilities". Bitagi (2003:16) cited Aina (1983) as having enumerated library information resources to include:

"results of technological application, expert evaluation, practical experience, miscellaneous facts such as addresses, names, prices, products and materials description, statistical data, books, journals, research and technical reports, notes and memoranda, annual reports, conference reports, conference reports, patents, theses etc".

Library and information services are the processes involved in satisfying the information needs of library users by librarians and information professionals. Such services therefore vary from library to library, depending on the resources available, experience of professionals and means of funding available to the library. Omekwu and Ugwuanyi (2010:56) identified library and information services to include "Current Awareness Service (CAS), Web services, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), listing of journal articles, Current Contents Analysis (CCA), Reference Services, Indexing and abstracting services, documentation of semi-published materials such as gazettes, etc". These services are provided so as to ensure that researchers have access to their needed information as and when necessary.

Amanchi (1986) in an occasional paper aimed at improving library services to the researchers at the National Steel Council (now NMDC), Jos compared the library performance with the objectives to measure the extent to which it was met. The researcher found out that "the researchers were not using the library as expected, while the library had no adequate resources with which to provide services." Similarly, Uyhili (1986) undertook a study of the provision and utilization of information in

the Central Metallurgical Research and Development Institute (National Steel Council and now NMDC). She found out that "while there was efficient use of available information resources, the library lacked adequate resources and as a result fail to satisfy the users information needs". The findings of the above authors may be the same for NMDC Library, Jos.

Bitagi (2009) studied the utilization of information resources and services by engineers in selected steel companies in Nigeria. Bitagi further discovered that most information sources provided by the libraries were in printed form as attested to by 77% of the respondents. Even then, 70% of the respondents argued that the printed information resources were inadequate, while 74% of the sources were said to be out of date. On the type of services offered, the author found out that "skeletal" services were provided while majority of the users (77%) only use these services "when the need arises".

The level of satisfaction of the provision of resources and services were rated by majority, (88%) as moderate and fair. Lack of modern Information Communication Technologies, the outdated state of printed information sources, inadequate resources, lack of qualified staff and management support, among others, were found to be the militating factors against the provision of information resources and services. The study recommended that the libraries should be adequately financed while acquisition of current printed and non-printed resources and employment of more qualified staff should be embarked upon so as to provide needed services.

VII. METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research method was used in the conduct of this research. In this direction, a set of questionnaire was drafted and administered to the scientists of the centre. In addition to that, the observation and interview methods were used to facilitate on-the-spot assessment of resources and services and a face-to-face interaction with the users of the library. Forty percent (40%) of the estimated one

hundred and twenty (120) researchers were sampled for the study.

The sampled population of the study is therefore forty-eight (48) which is representative enough of the entire population. Simple random sampling method of drawing by ballot of 8 scientists from the sections of each of the six (6) Technical Departments was used. Data gathered was analyzed using a Linkert type of presentation with frequencies and percentages. Below each table, the interpretation of its contents is given. Equally, each of the members of the population was interviewed to capture their personal feelings about the resources and services. Additionally, a critical observation of the library was made so as to ascertain the availability of information resources and services that are actually provided.

VIII. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Response Rate

Forty-eight (48) copies of questionnaire were

administered and a total of forty (40) were returned and found usable. This represents eighty (80%) response rate. In rating the available information resources, adequacy of PIR was mostly rated as average as revealed by 15 (37.5%) of the respondents. This is followed by two categories, 10 (25%) who rated the adequacy of PIR as high and low, respectively. 5 (12.5%) rated it as very low. The currency of the available PIR was mostly rated by majority of the respondents, 20 (50%) as very low. This is followed by 8 (20%) of those who rated it as average while 7 (17.5%) also rated it as low. 5 (12.5%) rated the currency of the PIR as high and none, 0(0%) rated it as very high. On the relevance of PIR to research areas of the centre, the highest number of respondents, 15 (37.5%) rated it as very high while two sets of 10 (25%) rated it as high and average, respectively. Only 5 (12.5%) of the respondents rated the relevance of the PIR to returned and found usable. This represents eighty (80%) response rate. Respondents were asked to rate the type of information resources provided by the library. Their responses are as shown in table 1 below

Table 1: Rating of the Available Information Resources

Statement	Very High		High		Average		Low		Very Low		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Adequacy of PIR*	0	0	10	25	15	37.5	10	25	5	12.5	40	100
Currency of PIR*	0	0	5	12.5	8	20	7	17.5	20	50	40	100
Relevance of PIR*	15	37.5	10	25	10	25	5	12.5	0	0	40	100
Availability of ICT **	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	100	40	100

*Printed Information Resources (Books, Journals etc).

**Information Communication Technologies (Computers and Related Electronic Gadgets)

The availability of ICT facilities in the library of NMDC was scored by all, 40 (100%) as very low. An observation made by this researcher shows that no ICT facility is provided in the library. This is an indication that the library is not automated and is not providing the most current information services to its users.

Respondents were then asked to rate the type of information services provided by the library. Their responses are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Rating of Information Services.

Type of services	Very High		High		Average		Low		Very low		Not available		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Library orientation	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	100	40	100
Staff assistance in location of information and information resources	0	0	0	0	10	25	25	62.5	5	12.5	0	0	40	100
Current awareness service	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	25	30	75	0	0	40	100
Selective dissemination of information	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	100	40	100
Compilation of bibliography, indexes and abstracts	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	100	40	100
Online internet service	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	100	40	100
Photocopying service	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	100	40	100
Loan of information resources	5	12.5	20	50	10	25	5	12.5	0	0	0	0	40	100
Inter-library loan service	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	12.5	35	87.5	40	100

Table 2 above shows the highest rating of the unavailability of major information services that are expected to be provided by the library as indicated by all, 40 (100%) of the respondents in the areas of library orientation; selective dissemination of information; compilation of bibliography, indexes and abstract; online Internet services; and photocopying services. This is closely followed by 35(87.5%) of those who indicated that interlibrary loan service is not also available as opposed to by an insignificant number of 5 (12.5%) who said the service is available. When combined, all the 40 (100%) respondents also rated the current awareness service as low and very low.

Equally, 30 (75%) of the respondents also indicated that staff assistance in the location of information and information resources is also low and very low respectively, Meanwhile, 10 (25%) rated staff assistance as average. The loan of information resources for home reading was rated by majority, 20 (50%) as high, while 5(12.5%) of the

respondents indicated that the rate is very high. 15 (25%) rated it as average and 5 (12.5%) as low. This is an area where the staff has shown a greater sense of responsibility. On the interlibrary loan service, 35(87.5%) of the respondents indicated the unavailability of the service while 5 (12.5%) rated it as very low.

In view of the above situations, the respondents were asked about the factors militating against the provision of information resources and services. Their responses are presented in table 3.

Table 3 below is the evidence of the fact that virtually all the respondents agree about the militating factors enumerated earlier although the extent vary from one problem to the other. For example, while all the 40 (100%) of the respondents agreed that there is lack of ICT facilities in the library, 30 (75%) and 10 (25%) indicated that there is inadequate library and information professionals and supportive staff to provide the needed information services. An observation and interview conducted by this researcher shows

that there is only one professional, one para-professional and a deployed clerical assistant from Research Administration Department.

In a similar way, 25 (62.5%) and 15 (37.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed, respectively that PIR are inadequate and out of date. Two groups of 29 (72.5%) of respondents indicated lack of interest by the center's management to develop the library,

and inadequate funding of the library is another militating factor in the provision of information resources and services. Majority of the respondents 23 (57.5%) also disagreed and strongly disagreed that library staff are not regularly trained while 17 (42.5%) strongly agreed and agreed that library staff are trained on regular basis

Table 3: Militating factors in the provision of information resources and services

	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Problem Statement										
Most PIR are inadequate and out of date.	15	37.5	25	62.5	0	0	0	0	40	100
Lack of ICT facilities in the library	40	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	40	100
Inadequate library and information professionals	30	75	10	25	0	0	0	0	40	100
Library staff are not regularly trained and retrained to cope with the type of services expected of them	5	12.5	12	30	15	37.5	8	20	40	100
Lack of enough management commitment in library development	10	25	19	47.5	5	12.5	6	15	40	100
There is inadequate funding of the library	24	60	5	12.5	8	20	3	7.5	40	100

A. Discussions of the findings

The findings in table 1 reveals that when put together, the adequacy and currency of printed information resources provided by NMDC library were rated by majority of the users between average and low. Despite this short coming about the collection, the materials were rated relevant to the research activities of the users as attested to by 62.5% of them. Meanwhile, no Information Communication Technologies in terms of resources and services are provided. This finding agrees with that of Bitagi (2009) when he discovered that, special libraries in the steel sector mostly provided printed

information resources which were inadequate in supply and out of date. This is an indication that, though special organizations/agents of government are tasked with the nation's developmental objectives, little attention is paid in providing their libraries with adequate, current and relevant information sources that could support attainment of their prescribed objectives. Consequently, most government agencies have failed to perform to expectations.

Equally, table 2 reveals that the expected information services, apart from loan of

information resources are not adequately provided. This corresponds with the earlier findings of Amanchi (1986) which is that the library had no adequate resources with which to provide services. This is to say that the identified information services by Omekwu and Ugwuanyi (2010) such as Current Awareness Service (CAS), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), etc, which are supposed to boost the performance of metallurgists are not provided. This situation confirms that scientists at the Centre may continue to do things as they were done before. Hence, no improvement or breakthrough will be made in their research efforts.

Meanwhile, table 3 identifies militating factors in the provision of information resources and services. Top most of these problems is lack of ICT facilities in the library followed by inadequate library and information professionals as agreed to by 100% and 75% of the respondents, respectively. Others are inadequate funding of the library, inadequate and outdated materials and lack of management commitment to library development agreed to by 60%, 37.5% and 25% of the respondents, respectively. The training of library and information professionals was also adjudged to be inadequate. The above findings were corroborated by Bitagi (2009) when he discovered that lack of modern communication technologies, outdated printed sources, lack of qualified staff and management support constituted militating factors in Nigeria's steel sector libraries. The provision of current information resources and services of today primarily hinges on two most important factors. These are the provision of enough funds to acquire needed resources such as Information Technologies, printed resources and the training of professionals to provide services from such sources.

The results of this study shows the way and manner the provision of special library resources and services in an institution (NMDC) that is supposed to lay a solid foundation in steel production is bastardized. No wonder then that steel production which is supposed to play a leading role in industrial take-off and subsequent development still

remains a big unrealizable dream in Nigeria.

Generally, the findings of this research could be a reflection of what obtains in special libraries established by other government parastatals or agencies in Nigeria and a revelation of why most of them have failed to achieve the desired goals.

IX. CONCLUSION

The way forward in achieving satisfactory provision of library and information resources and services by NMDC library is to make up for the deficiencies identified, as limiting factors in table 3. These include provision of all types of current and adequate information resources, employment of more professionals and other staff and training and retraining them so as to live up to expectations in services provision. Management of the centre should, as a matter of priority and urgency be more proactive in the funding and giving other necessary support for library development. This is imperative so as to equip the research officers with needed information in their various areas of specification.

X. REFERENCES

- Amanchi, R.A. (1986). *A survey and evaluation of users' in the library of National Steel Council, Jos*. Jos: NSC.
- Attama, O.R. (2005). Polytechnic education, library resources and technological development in Nigeria. *Global Review of Library and Information Science*. 1 (1): 9-18.
- Bitagi, A.M. (1994). The resources and services of the NMDC Library, Jos. An unpublished research project presented to the Department of LIS, A.B.U., Zaria for the award of Bachelor of Library and Information Science.
- Bitagi, A.M. (2003). Information needs and resources utilization by engineers in selected steel companies in Nigeria. Unpublished MLS Thesis, Dept of Library and Information Science, B.U.K., Kano.
- Bitagi, A.M. (2009). Utilization of information resources and services by engineers in selected steel companies in Nigeria. *The Information Technologist: An International Journal of Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*. 6(2): 39-49
- Echazona, R.I. (2005). The use of information resources by lecturers in biological sciences in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. *Global Review of Library and Information Science*. 1 (1): 19-30.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (1979). *National Steel Council Decree*. Lagos: Federal Government Printers.
- Federal Government of Nigeria (1992). *National Metallurgical Development Centre Decree*. Abuja: Federal Government Printers.
- Goni, K.A. (1991). Preface N.M.DC Library Bulletin. 1(1): 2
- Ikhizama, B.O.(2004). Information resources for agricultural development: the role of agricultural research libraries in Nigeria. *Nigerian Libraries*. 36(1): 10-19.
- Lawani, S. M. (1974). An assessment of the holdings of tropical agricultural periodicals in Nigerian Libraries. *Nigerian Libraries*. 10(1): 1-15.
- National Metallurgical Development Centre (1992). *Guide to NMDC, Jos, Nigeria*. Lagos: Jeromeliabo and Associates Ltd.
- Omekwu, C.O. and Ugwuanyi, L.F. (2010). Towards effective library services in the Nigerian judiciary, *Tincity Journal of Library, Archival and Information Science: Journal of the NLA, Plateau State Chapter*. 1 (2): 52-57.
- Oyedokun, A.A. (2007). *Information literacy for tertiary education studies in Africa*. Ibadan: Third World Information Services Ltd.
- Silva, M. (1970) *Special Libraries*. London: Andre Deustch.
- Uyhili, E.A. (1986). The provision and utilization of information in the Central Metallurgical Research and Development Institute, Jos. An unpublished research project, Department of LIS, A.B.U. Zaria for the award of BLIS.