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AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION RESOURCES AND SERVICES IN PRISON LIBRARIES IN ANAMRA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the availability of information resources and services in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria. The purpose of the study is to ascertain the availability of electronic and print information resources and also the availability of information services in prison libraries. Two research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 1781 inmates in prisons in Anambra state. The sample size of 327 was selected using Taro Yamane's formula and the proportionate stratified random sampling technique was further adopted to ensure that all sub-groups in the population participate in the study in the same proportion as they exist in the population. The instrument used for data collection was observation check-list. The data collected were analyzed using percentage. The findings of the study revealed among others that information resources are available but limited in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria. Also, that there were library services although more innovative services need to be established to be completely in tandem with the demands of the current era.

Keywords: information resources, availability, information services, prison libraries

Introduction

The advancement of society is greatly dependent on the availability of the right information. Information is the grease that oils the wheels of any organisation. Information is not only useful to organisations but also very essential for the day-to-day activities of individuals and is deemed a fundamental human right. Information is the result of processing, manipulating, and organizing data in a way that adds to the knowledge of the receiver (Chimah & Nkwocha, 2013). Information, which is a catalyst for change, has become as important as life itself.

Information resources are needed to achieve the goals of the prison institution which in the opinion of Eze (2013) includes rehabilitation, reformation, education, and re-socialization of prisoners. It is the duty of the prison librarians to use these information resources to serve the prisoners. Availability of information resources is necessary in order to provide good and productive information services. Availability of adequate information resources is essential for libraries to function and optimally perform their designated duty of providing patrons with needed information and this involves making the said resources accessible, when and where needed. Availability of information resources justifies the existence of the library. These information resources can come in print and electronic forms. The print resources can be novels, newspapers, magazines, textbooks, and journals. Electronic resources include audio materials, audio-visual resources, electronic books,

online databases, CD-ROM, and electronic journals.

The adoption of electronic resources in the practice of librarianship and providing educational services has provided possibilities for improving teaching and learning, and this it does by making processes faster than is obtainable through the traditional means (Nwachukwu & Asom, 2015). Akporhonor and Akpojotor (2016) observed that electronic resources are systems in which information is stored mechanically and made accessible through electronic and computer network. Aina (2014) also opined that e-resources aid in granting access to information that might be restricted to users due to geographical location. This is true especially in the case of prisoners. Electronic resources also have the capacity to be easily and speedily updated.

Historically, correctional institutions have been unhurried in embracing technology for inmate-focused programs due to funding constraints and security issues, this is notwithstanding that there is an absolute need to introduce the prison inmates to electronic resources, in order to give them tools to reintegrate into society with a ready mindset being that one of the major frustrations faced by newly released inmates is attempting to fit into the general workforce with a criminal background. If they are given the opportunity to learn how current and trending technology works, that gives them a better chance to hit the ground running (Hennick, 2017). In a study conducted by Sharda and Tiwari (2021), it was categorically stated that there were no electronic resources available for the use of prisoners.

More than 60% of jobs will require at least some college education by 2018, according to projections from Georgetown University (Moraff, 2016). This indicates the need for prisoners to have every information resource necessary not only to keep their mind occupied while incarcerated but also to facilitate their educational goals. Furthermore, many of the jobs prisoners seek to engage in upon release require at least some level of computer appreciation incorporated into the general education already offered them. Also, most examinations including entrance, qualification and certification examinations are conducted using computers. Therefore use of electronic resources with the aid of prison library staff equips prisoners with requisite knowledge to navigate information and communication technology devices. Thereby, affording them ample opportunity to learn new skills that would make them better and qualified for employment given their already disadvantaged status of being ex-convicts, and since technical proficiency is now an essential job skill. Being able to access electronic resources such as the internet increases the digital literacy of prisoners and can help in promoting their job-searching abilities on re-entry into society (Ogbonnaya-Ogburu et al. 2019).

The prison library particularly need to have myriads of information resources in print form that cover most if not all the information needs of users due to the restrictions usually placed on electronic resources. According to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) (2005) the library collection should include general reference titles, fictions and non-fictions, legal materials, magazines and newspapers, comic and graphic novels, self-study materials which are to support distance learning/ correspondence classes and life-long learning. Other materials mentioned are easy-to-read materials for patrons with reading problems, and large-print books for persons

with visual problems. Traditional printed information resources should be carefully selected by the professional librarians to ensure that materials acquired by the library meet the standard of information required for its services (Mohammed, 2015). The prison library must have an enduring collection of resources that is easily accessible, meaningful and up-to-date. The emergence of electronic information resources does not in any way invalidate the need for print information resources in the library.

Adomi (2012) emphasized the necessity of making information resources available because they are materials from which people get various ideas, obtain meaningful messages, enlightenment and necessary exposure that will grant them the ability to accomplish tasks, take life changing decisions and bring solutions to problems. Mfum (2012) further opined that the prison library should be at the fore-front in providing educational services to prison inmates which will in turn help the prison institution in achieving the goal of rehabilitation. Maxwell (2018) in his study of print information resources utilization, acknowledged that availability of information resources in print format is indispensable although this is limited by issues such as poor funding of the library which in turns results to the accumulation of obsolete print information resources. Studies carried out by Obiano et al. (2020) and Emesealu (2017) revealed that print information resources are available in prison libraries including fiction books, textbooks, and magazines while others like newspapers were found not to be available. Also, the findings of Emesealu and Popoola (2016) exposed that there are no ICT facilities and internet service, creating a digital divide.

Information services are the essential actors in providing unmitigated access to essential resources housed in the library. The mission of the prison library is to provide the highest quality of information resources and services in response to the information needs of the prison population (Conrad, 2012). Obiamalu and Echedom (2021) described library services as those services which could be provided physically or virtually to library users by library staff. According to Ononeyan and Okereke (2014) library information services focuses on procedures and operations of maintaining, developing and supporting library collections and activities behind the scene. For the library to provide required services, it has to create a collection that caters to the diverse information needs of prisoners. Okwor et al. (2010) noted that library services to prisoners are critical to their rehabilitation and readjustment into the larger society on release.

Information services are arrays of activities and facilities targeted at providing information in various formats to satisfy the broad and varying information needs of library patrons within a community or society (Eze, 2017). Also, Issa et al. (2013) stated that information services are services that are aimed towards providing users with the right information needed to answer queries and to help them accomplish the task of decision making or the reduction of the level of uncertainty. There is a myriad of library information services such as user education and others which includes: reference service, referral service, current awareness service (CAS), selective dissemination of information (SDI) service, literature search services, document delivery services (DDS), translation services, web-OPAC services, article indexing services, lending services, union catalogue and interlibrary loan (ILL) services, electronic document delivery services, outreach services, ICT based library services, reprography services (Patel, 2015).

The need for these services is buttressed by Garner (2017) who stated that library information services are necessary and should be available because they are an avenue for the prison inmates to momentarily get away from the distasteful environment synonymous with prisons, making productive use of their time, connecting with other people not just within the prison but outside too through the use of information and communication technology.

The services of the prison library are to be provided adequately and efficiently, but unfortunately this is not always the case as Obioha (2011) who in his study of challenges and reforms in the Nigerian prison system observed that the workshops for learning of vocational skills are not readily available and when they do exist, are not equipped with sufficient instructors and equipment. He went further to recommend that the services should not be limited to crafts such as carpentry and bricklaying but be expanded to operating computers which is where the library services is expected to be effective. The necessity of providing library information services to prisoners is emphasized by Marshall (2011) who opined that prison libraries provide services to not just the prisoners but also the public by helping educate the prisoners, reduce recidivism, and improve relationships through reading. Sharda and Tiwari (2021) posited that in order to provide and improve library services to prisoners, it is necessary to conduct surveys regularly to determine the services that are lacking and the ones they find inadequate. This is done in a bid to discover any gap in the service provided by the library. Findings of studies by Izuchukwu et al. (2021) and Folorunsho and Folorunsho (2019) indicated that information services such as reference services, counseling services, circulation services, collection development and management services were available, they also identified the services that were not available such as; ICT and internet services, inter-library cooperation/library networks.

Statement of the Problem

Prisoners by virtue of their incarceration are alienated from the general society and do not have the same privilege as other people to access information freely. Prisoners, same as other individuals in the society need information resources and information services made available to them to help them navigate their day to day activities and also make decisions. Unavailability of information resources and services are adjudged to affect the enlightenment of prison inmates hence their adjustment both within the prison environment and on the event of their release into the society.

It is the duty of the library to make information resources and services available to bridge the gap between information and those who need it, and only prison libraries that have good collection development practices and provide essential services can accomplish this duty. It therefore becomes necessary to carry out this study to identify the available information resources and services in prison libraries, thus, this study is faced with the challenge of examining the availability of information resources and services in prison libraries in Anambra state.

Research Questions

1. What are the electronic information resources available to prisoners in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria?
2. What are the print information resources available to prisoners in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria?

3. What are the library information services available to prisoners in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria?

Research Method

The research design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Anambra state, Nigeria. The population of the study consists of all 1781 inmates in the four prisons in Anambra state, Nigeria, these include: Medium Security Custodial Centre Aguata (MSCCA) 175 inmates, Medium Security Custodial Centre Nnewi (MSCCN) 262 inmates, Awka Custodial Centre (ACC) 450 inmates, and Medium Security Custodial Centre Onitsha (MSCCO) 894 inmates. The sample size of 327 was selected using Taro Yamane's formula and proportionate stratified random sampling technique was further employed to ensure that each subgroup is equitably represented. The instrument for data collection was a checklist. The instrument for the study was validated by three experts, two from the Department of Library and Information Science, and one from the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement & Evaluation Unit). The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Percentages were used to analyze data obtained from research question three. Data with the scale of 50% and above is accepted as available and data below 50% is rejected as not available.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What are the electronic information resources available to prisoners in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria?

Table 1: ***Electronic Information Resources Available in Prison Libraries in Anambra State***

S/N	Items	ACC	MSCCO	MSCCA	MSCCN	AV
1	CD-ROM databases	0	0	0	0	0
2	Online databases	0	0	0	0	0
3	E-newspapers	0	0	0	0	0
4	E-journals	0	0	0	0	0
5	E-books	0	0	0	0	0
6	E-newsletters	0	0	0	0	0
7	E-dictionaries and Encyclopedia	0	0	0	0	0
8	E-pictures	0	0	0	0	0
9	E-subject guide	0	0	0	0	0
10	Internet Facilities	0	0	0	0	0

(AV) = Available

Table 1 shows that there are no electronic information resources available in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria. These includes CD-ROM databases (0), Online databases (0), E-newspapers (0), E-journals (0), E-books (0), E-newsletters (0), E-dictionaries and Encyclopedia (0), E-pictures (0), E-subject guide (0), Internet Facilities (0). This absence is recorded in all the prisons including Awka Custodial Centre, Medium Security Custodial Centre Onitsha, Medium Security Custodial Centre Aguata, and Medium Security Custodial Centre Nnewi.

Research Question 2: What are the print information resources available to prisoners in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria?

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Table 2: ***Print Information Resources Available in Prison Libraries in Anambra State***

S/N	ITEMS	ACC	MSCCO	MSCCA	MSCCN
	Books				
1	Science fiction	175	1	10	4
2	Other fictional works	2975	1008	141	178
3	Languages	56	11	5	3
4	History	37	6	-	-
5	Religion	405	37	30	25
6	Science and technology	1130	17	2	8
7	Social sciences	85	9	10	5
8	Textbooks on subjects such as mathematics and agriculture etc.	367	9	120	62
9	Encyclopedia	14	-	14	-
10	Dictionaries	4	-	4	-
11	Bibliographies	16	-	-	-
12	Legal materials	11	-	-	-
13	Directories	18	-	-	-
14	Handbooks	53	-	-	-
	Total Books	5346	1098	336	285
15	Magazines	150	104	150	80
16	Newspapers	-	-	-	-

Table 2 shows the print information resources in the collection of prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria. ACC has 15 which is approximately 94% of the 16 listed print information resources expected to be made available to prisoners. MSCCO has 9 which is 56%, MSCCA has 10 which is 63%, MSCCN has 8 which is 50% out of the 16 listed print information resources expected to be made available to the prisoners in Anambra state. None of the prison libraries have newspapers in their collections.

Research Question 3: What are the library information services available to prisoners in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria?

Table 3: ***Percentages of Library Information Services Available in Prison Libraries in Anambra State***

S/N	Items	ACC	MSCCO	MSCCA	MSCCN	AV	N/AV	%(AV)	Decision
1	Information literacy	√	√	√	√	4	0	100%	Available
2	Current awareness services	√	-	√	-	2	2	50%	Available
3	Selective dissemination of information	√	-	-	-	1	3	25%	Not Available
4	Bibliographic services	√	-	-	-	1	3	25%	Not Available

5	Document delivery services	-	-	-	-	0	4	0%	Not Available
6	Reference services	√	-	√	-	2	2	50%	Available
7	Referral services	-	-	-	-	0	4	0%	Not Available
8	Resource sharing (Consortium service)	-	-	-	-	0	4	0%	Not Available
9	Reprographic services	-	-	-	-	0	4	0%	Not Available
10	Inter-library loan	-	-	-	-	0	4	0%	Not Available
11	Collection development and management services	√	√	√	√	4	0	100%	Available
12	Counseling services	-	√	√	√	3	1	75%	Available
13	Outreach services	√	-	√	-	2	2	50%	Available
14	Translation services	√	√	√	√	4	0	100%	Available
15	Internet services	-	-	-	-	0	4	0%	Not Available
	Total	8	4	7	4				

(AV) (√) = Available, (N/AV) (-) = Not Available

Data presented on table 3 shows the percentage responses on the availability of library information services in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria. The result shows that only 3 out of the 15 information services listed are available in all the prison libraries studied. ACC has 8 which is 53% of the information services listed, MSCCO has 4 which is 27%, MSCCA has 7 which is 47% and MSCCN has 4 which is also 27% of all the information services listed. All the prison libraries provide Information literacy (100%), Collection development and management services (100%), and Translation services (100%). MSCCO, MSCCA and MSCCN provide Counseling services (75%), ACC and MSCCA provide Current awareness services (CAS) (50%), Reference services (50%) and Outreach services (50%). Only ACC provide Selective dissemination of information (SDI) (25%) and Bibliographic services (25%). Document delivery services (0%), Referral services (0%), and Resource sharing (consortium service) (0%), Reprographic services (0%), Inter-library loan (0%) and Internet services (0%) were not available in any of the prison libraries.

Discussion of Findings

Findings in table 1 shows that there are no electronic resources in any of the libraries

sunder study. The findings agree with Emesealu and Popoola (2016) who found that there are no ICT facilities in prison libraries, therefore creating a digital divide, their study further elaborating on the need that prison libraries should provide not only electronic resources but secure access to the internet in order for prison inmates to remain abreast of current trends.

Findings in table 2 shows that a significant number of the print resources listed are available in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria. The findings of the study is in line with the studies of Obiano et al. (2020) and Emesealu (2017) that some information resources such as fiction books, textbooks and magazines are available to the prisoners while others such as newspapers are non-existent.

Findings in table 3 indicate that a certain number of library information services were available while a noticeable number of services are found to not be available in prison libraries in Anambra state, Nigeria. The current findings concurred with the findings of Izuchukwu, et al. (2021) and Folorunsho and Folorunsho (2019) that prisoners identify information literacy, reference services, counseling services, collection development and management services, and outreach services as the library information services available to them while others such as inter-library loan and internet services were not available.

Conclusion

There are several information resources available in the prison libraries including books on history, religion, science and technology, social sciences; textbooks on subjects such as mathematics and agriculture, encyclopedia, dictionaries, while others such as newspapers and electronic resources were found to not be available. Also, information services are available in prison libraries although they are limited.

Recommendations

Prison library staff should collaborate with the prison administration not only to attract funds with which to facilitate collection development in the library but also to attract donations of information resources from diverse individuals and agencies, this can also be achieved with the help of public libraries and library associations. An avenue should also be created through which the different prison libraries would practice inter-library loan, thereby maximizing the resources at their disposal. Professional librarians should be employed by the prison management to manage prison libraries and in a situation where this is not feasible, the staff in charge of the prison libraries should be given adequate orientation on the tenets of librarianship in order to facilitate effective and efficient rendering of service.

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