

**A SURVEY OF THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL LIBRARY  
OF NIGERIA, OWERRI BRANCH, 2005 - 2011.**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*This study investigated the growth and development of National Library of Nigeria, Owerri Branch, 2005-2011. The descriptive analysis of data collected showed that the respondents confirmed that the quantum of resources in the Owerri branch are adequate except for few computers that are not connected to the internet, government is the only source of funding, the growth of the branch per year in terms of resources and staff though positive is very minimal. Funding was identified as the major factor inhibiting its growth. The researchers recommended that adequate funding should be provided and the library should device alternative sources of funding and internet facilities provided so that users will join the trend of information super highway.*

**Introduction**

National libraries have had various origins, some for example some were established for the purpose they presently serve while others came into being as a result of the dedication to public use of government private collections. Many have developed into their present stature through a gradual extension of their privileges and facilities to ever increasing patronage (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2003). National Library is a complex, multifaceted phenomenon, subject to varied connotations and definitions, largely because of its differing origins and assigned functions in different countries. Whereas in many developed countries, the national libraries often originated as a royal collection, gradually becoming public property, in developing countries, it is usually established by the central government through legal enactment to perform specific national functions.

Everyone needs information for survival. So library service to all therefore becomes even more necessary. This was one of the reasons why national libraries were established. National library according to Edoka (2000) is the library of libraries, a focal point for overall library and information services in the

country. With the establishment of the National Library of Nigeria by the National Library Act 1964, doors for library development in Nigeria was opened. The most unique provision of the Act was its stipulation of the establishment of branches in the states of the federation.

National Library of Nigeria Owerri Branch is one of the 22 branches established to bring library services to the grassroots. The wind of change that have swept across Imo State since her creation in 1976 have accelerated considerably the pace of development of the national library branch at Owerri. The emergence of new government ministries, agencies and parastatals, higher institutions of learning and specialized agencies in the state are of particular importance in the growth and increased patronage of the national library branch. In 1976, there were only few of these institutions but presently, their numbers have increased. Political development in the state has been accompanied by planned efforts aimed at economic and social development to raise living standards of citizens including provision of information resources and services infrastructure, The strength of this research therefore lies in its ability to ascertain the growth and development of the branch of the National Library of Nigeria starting from 2005 to 2011 period,

### **Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives guided this research:

- i. To ascertain the quantum of resources available in the National Library, Owerri Branch from 2005-2011.
- ii. To determine the personnel category in National Library, Owerri Branch from 2005-2011
- iii. To identify the sources of funding for the National Library, Owerri Branch from 2005-2011
- iv. To determine the rate of growth of the library within the period under review in terms of resources, technology, manpower, services vis-a-vis other branches.
- v. To determine the factors that inhibit the growth and development of Owerri Branch and suggest ways to overcome them.

### **Review of related literature**

National libraries are usually reference libraries. By reference, it implies that the stocks here are usually not meant for circulation outside the library walls. National libraries are the facilities to support legal deposit and have the responsibility of being the watchdogs for copyrights (Oduagwu, 2002).

The National library occupies a pivotal place in any nation. It is a library of common heritage. It is funded and owned by a given country or nation. National

libraries exist all over the world. For instance, the National Library of USA is called the Library of Congress, that of Britain is called the British Museum and that of France is La Bibliotheque Nationale.

The futuristic dynamism of libraries rests on national libraries. This great role has put national library at an apex position and the vanguard for ultimate collection of recorded knowledge in all fields of human endeavours. It is the flag bearer in the provision of library services to the nation. Ugocha (2008) maintains that national library must maintain excellent and result oriented services that will satisfy the various needs of the patrons that come into the national library.

In Nigeria, the mission of the National Library of Nigeria is to collect, organize, preserve and dissemination data and information to stipulate and promote access to and utilization of knowledge as well as advising on library management through qualified managerial capacity for accelerated and sustained development (Gbadamosi, 2004). Funds for National Library of Nigeria come from the Federal Government, international foundations and Unesco. The funding of the National Library of Nigeria is poor. The funding of the National Library of Nigeria leaves much to be desired even though the democratic government is making concerted efforts to improve its funding. The Federal Government of Nigeria through the supervisory ministry - Federal Ministry of Education - principally funds the National Library of Nigeria.

A unique aspect of the National Library Decree No 29 of 1970 is the establishment and maintenance of a branch in each state of the federation (Aguolu, 2002). To enable the branches of the library to execute their functions, it was recommended that each branch stock the following category of materials, without prejudice to the state library holding any of them; general reference materials, specialized materials relating to the activities of the state, publications of government and allied agencies, basic and specialized reference materials, important bibliographies (general and specialized), audio-visual materials, legal deposit publications, materials on oral tradition relating to state, in both recorded and transcript form, micro-documents and Africana. A library may be stocked with adequate and up-to-date reading materials, but all this will amount to sheer waste if there are no competent hands to organize these materials for use (Chukwu, 1988).

With advancement in ICT, the trend is now towards digital information. Amen (2007) is of the view that libraries should speed up efforts to be fully automated so as not to be left out of the global digital race. Training of librarians in ICT skills should be given priority by management and need to acquire more ICT equipment in the National Library of Nigeria.

The law also stipulates that there should be a Board who shall be responsible for appointments, promotion, transfer and general administration of the staff.

The National Library law provides for a Board with members drawn from each state of the federation and some interest groups. The Board's function relates to policy programmes and excludes managerial.

### **Methodology**

For the purpose of this research, the survey method was used. The population of this study comprised of 16 staff of the National Library Owerri Branch. They were made up of 3 professionals, 4 Para-professional and 9 library assistants. The questionnaire, observation method, consultation of documents such as accession register and interview were the instruments for data collection. Tables and percentages were used to analyze and present details of the data collected.

### **Data analysis and interpretation of findings**

**Table 1: Quantum of Resources Available**

<b>Resources</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Newspapers	13,562	14,393	15,049	15,848	16,970	17,626	17,626
Journals	3,231	3,296	3,339	3,390	3,459	3,557	3,574
Official Documents	4,151	4,196	4,196	4,196	4,223	4,223	4,223
Monographs	7,539	8,010	8,225	8,722	9,025	9,309	10,721
Computers	-	-	-	-	-	8	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,483</b>	<b>29,895</b>	<b>30,809</b>	<b>32,156</b>	<b>33,677</b>	<b>34,723</b>	<b>36,152</b>

The analysis in table 1 above shows there is an increase in the quantum of resources available in the library from 2005-2011, but the increase is not at a substantial rate. It is of note that the quantum of official documents was at 4,196 for years 2006-2008 and 4,223 for years 2009-2011. This shows that official documents of both the federal and state governments were not deposited as they should. And if users cannot get these documents from the apex library of the nation, one wonders how accessible they are. The audio-visual available is computer but the researchers on close observation noticed that they are not being used because the National Library Owerri Branch do not subscribe to internet services. On rating of information resources, 4(25%) of the respondents ticked very adequate, 9 (56%) ticked fairly adequate while 3 (19%) chose inadequate. This implies that majority of the respondents find

the information resources to be adequate. This notwithstanding, the library would need to put in more efforts to satisfy its users who will want to surf the net for information by providing internet services.

The researchers went further to know which of the information resources are mostly used by users. Multiple answers were given. This shows that users do not use only one information resource. All respondents representing 100% ticked textbooks and periodicals, 8 (50%) reference materials, 7 (44%) government documents. It can be deduced from the above analysis that textbooks and periodicals form the bulk of information resources consulted. The lack of response for computers is because the internet facility is not functioning.

**Table 2: Categories of Staff**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Professional	1	3	3	3	3	3	3
Para-Professionals	4	4	2	3	3	4	4
Library Assistants	9	8	6	6	6	6	7
Support Staff	4	4	4	4	4	4	5
Security/Cleaners	13	12	2	2	2	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>

From table 2 above, it can be seen that the National Library Owerri Branch has a total of 21 staff as at 2011, though there were more staff in the previous years, the rationalization of staff by the federal government in 2007 is seen as the reason for this decrease in the number of staff. Analysis from table above also shows that the staff that know the rudiments of librarianship (professionals and Para-professionals) are low compared to other categories. The implication of this is that given the number of registered users and the shift duty in existence, the staff may not be adequate to handle the users of the library.

**Table 3: Sources of Funding**

Sources	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Government	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Reprographic Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Registration of Users	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Philanthropists	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 3 above indicates that the only source of funding for the National Library Owerri Branch for the period under study is the government. This implies that given the inadequate fund released by the government, there is no way the needs of the library will be met without other sources of funding.

**Table 4: Rate of Growth of Resources, Technology, and Manpower per Year.**

Years	Resources	%	Manpower	%	Technology	%
2005	28,483	-	31	-	-	-
2006	29,898	5	31	-	-	-
2007	30,809	3	17	-82	-	-
2008	32,156	4	18	6	-	-
2009	33,677	6	18	-	-	-
2010	34,723	3	19	5	8	-
2011	36,152	4	21	10	8	-

Analysis from table 4 above shows that there is a very minimal growth rate in resources, staff and technology. The sharp drop in the number of staff in 2007 from what it was in 2005 and 2006 was as a result of rationalization/downsizing exercise of civil servants nationwide. As a result 14 staff were disengaged. Though there was increase in the number of staff after then, it was minimal. With regards to technology, there were no computers until 2010 when eight (8) was acquired. Out of these, six (6) of the computers were used for internet services and the other two for secretarial works leaving non for the automation of library services. However, the internet services were not functional in 2011. This implies that there is negative growth rate in this

aspect. At this rate, the National Library Owerri Branch will not meet up with the globalization process and there is every need to see that things improve.

**Table 6: Factors that Inhibit Growth and Development of the Owerri Branch**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Funding	16	100
Non adherence to legal deposit law	8	50
Centralized cataloguing	7	44
Inadequate staff	8	50
Lack of internet services	10	63
Location of the branch	7	44
Lack of awareness of the library services	3	19
Inadequate information resources	3	19
Low patronage	5	31

Funding according to the analysis in table 6 above is seen as the major factor inhibiting the growth and development of Owerri Branch with 100% response rate. Next to it is lack of internet services and the least factor is lack of awareness of the library services and inadequate information resources each getting 3 (19%). The result and analysis of data reveals that there are problems inhibiting the growth and development of Owerri Branch of the National Library.

## **Conclusion**

From the findings of this research, the following conclusions were drawn;

- ❖ Government is the only source of funding for the Owerri Branch.
- ❖ Official documents of the government are not regularly deposited in the Owerri Branch.
- ❖ The numbers of professional and para-professional staff are low compared to other categories of staff.
- ❖ Internet services are not available in the Owerri Branch.
- ❖ Users of the library make use of different types of information resources.

- ❖ There is inadequate funding,
- ❖ The library operations are not automated.
- ❖ The rate of growth in terms of resources, technology and manpower is very minimal.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made for the improvement of the growth and development of Owerri Branch of the National library.

- ❖ Adequate funding of the National Library of Nigeria by the federal government as finance is a central factor of production with which all other factors anchor.
- ❖ Provision of internet facilities. Libraries have become more sophisticated and more ICT dependent. More computers should be acquired and connected to the internet in order to satisfy users who are in need of it
- ❖ Library operations should be automated.
- ❖ More staff should be employed to carry out effective and efficient library services.
- ❖ The Branch should devise alternative means of generating revenue such as reprographic services, internet services, consultancy services etc.
- ❖ Official documents should be regularly deposited in the National Library Owerri Branch.



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