

OPTIMIZING MANAGEMENT AND UTILISATION OF LEGAL DEPOSIT RESOURCES FOR ENHANCED USER SUPPORT IN THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NIGERIA

By

TAMA T. A. TIMOKO CLN

Academic Librarian, Taraba State University Library, Jalingo

BLESSING T. CLEMENT CLN

Status: Academic Librarian, Taraba State Polytechnic Library, Jalingo

and

JANET IBRAHIM SABO KENTE

Taraba State College of Education, Zing

Abstract

This study examined the management and utilisation of legal deposit resources in the National Library of Nigeria with a view to identifying challenges and proposing strategies for enhanced user support. Guided by three research questions, the study adopted a descriptive survey design. A purposive sample of 55 respondents, comprising both staff and users of the National Library, participated in the study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency counts and percentages. Findings revealed that although legal deposit resources are regularly deposited, their management and utilisation remain weak. Only 38.2% of staff reported consistent cataloguing of resources, while just 27.3% of users were aware of their existence, and 18.2% had accessed them. Major challenges identified included inadequate digital infrastructure (80%), low user awareness (74.5%), poor cataloguing practices (67.3%), weak compliance by publishers (61.8%), and insufficient staff training (52.7%). To address these issues, respondents recommended digitisation of resources (85.5%), user awareness campaigns (78.2%), creation of online searchable databases (70.9%), staff training (61.8%), and stronger enforcement of legal deposit laws (54.5%). The study concludes that while the legal deposit system in Nigeria has strong potential as a national knowledge resource, it is underutilised due to structural and institutional barriers. It recommends urgent modernisation through digitisation, awareness creation, staff capacity building, and enforcement of compliance by publishers.

Implementing these strategies will reposition the National Library of Nigeria as an effective custodian of the nation's intellectual heritage and a reliable support system for researchers and other users.

Keywords: Legal Deposit, Resource Management, National Library of Nigeria, Digitization, User Support.

Introduction

Legal deposit resources are critical to national knowledge preservation, cultural heritage archiving, and the democratization of access to information. These resources, which publishers are legally mandated to deposit with national libraries, provide a comprehensive record of a country's intellectual and creative output. In Nigeria, the National Library of Nigeria (NLN) serves as the depository institution tasked with collecting, organizing, preserving, and providing access to these materials. However, the potential of legal deposit resources to enhance scholarly and public access to information remains underutilized, primarily due to challenges in management, accessibility, and user engagement (Okojie & Lawal, 2019).

Globally, national libraries have adopted innovative strategies to improve the management and utilization of legal deposit collections. These include digitization of print materials, development of integrated library management systems, and collaboration with publishers and institutions to ensure compliance and resource sharing (Macheke & Mutshewa, 2018). While some developed countries have made significant strides in this direction, developing countries including Nigeria still struggle with compliance enforcement, inadequate infrastructure, lack of automation, and limited public awareness about legal deposit systems (Oladele, 2021). These challenges hinder the optimization of legal deposit resources and, by extension, limit the scope of user support services.

The importance of studying the effective management and utilization of legal deposit resources lies in its potential to improve user support services, promote research efficiency, and increase access to indigenous knowledge. Moreover, legal deposit collections serve as a foundation for bibliographic control, historical documentation, and intellectual property tracking (Obi & Adeyemi, 2020). Understanding how these resources are currently being managed, and to what extent they are utilized, is crucial in strengthening the role of the National Library as a national knowledge hub.

Despite the mandate of the National Library of Nigeria to preserve the nation's literary heritage, studies have shown that legal deposit materials are often underutilized due to poor cataloging systems, lack of digitization, inadequate staffing, and minimal user awareness (Okezie, 2017). These systemic issues not only affect the quality of library services but also reduce the impact that legal deposit materials could have on education, policymaking, and socio-cultural development. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the present condition of these resources in the NLN and propose evidence-based interventions for improvement.

This study seeks to empirically evaluate the management and utilization of legal deposit resources in the National Library of Nigeria. It aims to determine the extent of compliance by publishers, assess the organizational strategies employed by the NLN, and explore how these resources are accessed and used by various categories of users. The study will further examine the challenges facing optimal use and propose actionable strategies for enhancing the role of legal deposit resources in supporting users' academic, professional, and informational needs. Ultimately, the findings will serve as a guide for policymakers, library administrators, and other

stakeholders to enhance the visibility, accessibility, and impact of legal deposit materials in Nigeria.

Problem Statement

As academic librarians and researchers working within Nigeria's library system, we have observed first-hand that legal deposit resources in the National Library of Nigeria (NLN) are not being managed and utilized to their full potential. Despite the NLN's statutory mandate to preserve the nation's intellectual heritage, many of the materials deposited remain uncatalogued, underutilized, and largely invisible to the very users they are meant to serve. Our professional experience has shown repeated cases of researchers, students, and even policymakers being unaware of the existence or value of these resources.

This concern goes beyond anecdotal evidence it reflects a deeper systemic problem. Legal deposit compliance by publishers is inconsistent, the available resources are poorly processed, and infrastructural limitations prevent meaningful digitization. In practical terms, this means that even when materials are deposited, they are not easily retrievable or usable by the public. The gap between resource availability and resource utilization is therefore wide, limiting the effectiveness of the NLN as a national knowledge hub (Okonkwo & Chukwuemeka, 2021)

While literature (e.g., Oladele, 2021; Okojie & Lawal, 2019) highlights challenges such as poor cataloging and low awareness, our concern as practitioners is that without urgent attention, the underutilization of legal deposit resources risks making the NLN irrelevant to users' needs. This study therefore stems from our professional observations and aims to

empirically examine the management and utilization of legal deposit resources in the NLN. By grounding the problem in lived professional realities, this study provides evidence-based strategies to reposition legal deposit resources as a central pillar of user support and national knowledge preservation.

Research Questions

1. How are legal deposit resources currently managed and utilized in the National Library of Nigeria?
2. What challenges exist in the management and use of these resources for user support?
3. How can the National Library improve the management and utilization of legal deposit resources to better support users?

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Concept of the National Library and Legal Deposit Resources

The national library is the apex library institution of a country, mandated to serve as the legal depository of the nation's intellectual and cultural heritage. It plays a central role in preserving knowledge, providing access to information, supporting education, and ensuring cultural continuity (IFLA, 2019). Unlike public or academic libraries, national libraries have statutory functions, often anchored on legal deposit laws, which require publishers and authors to submit copies of their works for preservation and future use (Obielodan & Eze, 2018).

In Nigeria, the National Library of Nigeria (NLN) was established by Act No. 29 of 1970 (as amended) to collect, preserve, and make available all published works in the country. Through the legal deposit provision, the NLN is empowered to ensure comprehensive national bibliographic control and facilitate access to resources for researchers, students, and policymakers (Okojie & Lawal, 2019). Thus, legal deposit resources are not only meant for preservation but also for active management and utilisation in supporting users' knowledge needs (Adebayo & Toyobo, 2022)

Management and Utilisation of Legal Deposit Resources

Effective management of legal deposit resources involves acquisition, cataloguing, indexing, preservation, digitization, and dissemination of materials (Ngulube, 2016). Utilisation refers to how users researchers, educators, students, and policymakers access and apply these resources for academic, professional, and cultural purposes (Adeniran & Adepoju, 2020). In developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and South Africa, national libraries have leveraged ICT to create online searchable databases of legal deposit resources, making them widely available to the public (British Library, 2020; National Library of South Africa, 2021).

In contrast, studies in Nigeria show that legal deposit resources are often underutilised due to cataloguing backlogs, poor digital infrastructure, and low user awareness (Oladele, 2021; Echezona & Ugwuanyi, 2019). This highlights the need for not only acquiring legal deposit materials but also managing them in ways that enhance discoverability and accessibility.

Challenges and Strategies for Effective Management and Utilisation

Despite the statutory mandate, the management and utilisation of legal deposit resources in Nigeria face persistent challenges. Key issues include inadequate funding (Oladele, 2021), lack of ICT infrastructure (Ngulube, 2016), poor cataloguing and indexing practices (Okojie & Lawal, 2019), weak compliance by publishers (Ayoade et al., 2023), and low awareness among users (Echezona & Ugwuanyi, 2019). These challenges limit the ability of the National Library of Nigeria to fully support users and fulfil its national mission.

Addressing these challenges requires multifaceted strategies. First, digitization of legal deposit resources and the development of online databases can increase access and utilisation (Nwalo & Anasi, 2021). Second, staff training in digital librarianship is necessary to build capacity for managing modern collections (Mcharazo & Koopman, 2018). Third, public awareness campaigns can inform researchers and students of the existence and value of legal deposit resources (Okeke, 2022). Fourth, stronger enforcement of legal deposit compliance is essential to ensure publishers submit materials as required by law (Adeniran & Adepoju, 2020). Lastly, government support through funding and policy reforms will provide a sustainable framework for modernising the NLN and ensuring it meets global best practices (Ogbonna et al., 2021).

Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which was considered appropriate for examining the management and utilisation of legal deposit resources in the

National Library of Nigeria (NLN). The design provided an opportunity to gather data directly from both staff and users of the NLN, thereby generating reliable insights into current practices, challenges encountered, and strategies for improvement. The population of the study consisted of staff of the NLN who were directly involved in the management of legal deposit resources, as well as registered users of the library who had interacted with such resources. This mix ensured that perspectives were obtained from both the providers and consumers of legal deposit services. From this population, a sample of fifty-five (55) respondents was purposively selected. The purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that only participants with direct experience and knowledge of legal deposit operations were included in the study. This approach enhanced the relevance and validity of the responses obtained. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, each corresponding to the research questions guiding the study. Items in the instrument focused on the management and utilisation of legal deposit resources, the challenges associated with these processes, and possible strategies for improvement. The data analysis was carried out using descriptive statistics, specifically frequency counts and percentages. These statistical tools were chosen because they provide simple and effective summaries of the responses and allow for clear interpretation of trends. The results were presented in tabular form to enhance clarity and readability.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: How are legal deposit resources managed and utilised in the National Library of Nigeria?

Table 1: Management and Utilisation of Legal Deposit Resources

Indicator	Frequency (n = 55)	Percentage (%)
Staff report regular cataloguing of legal deposit resources	21	38.2
Legal deposit materials are made available to users promptly	17	30.9
Users are aware of legal deposit collections	15	27.3
Users have accessed and utilised legal deposit resources	10	18.2

The findings reveal that the management and utilisation of legal deposit resources in the National Library of Nigeria remain weak. Only 38.2% of staff reported regular cataloguing of materials, while just 30.9% indicated that legal deposit resources were made available to users promptly. Awareness among users was also low (27.3%), with only 18.2% reporting actual usage of the collections.

These results suggest that although legal deposit materials are being collected, their processing and accessibility remain inadequate. This aligns with the observations of Oladele (2021) and Okojie & Lawal (2019), who emphasized that cataloguing inefficiencies and lack of digitization hinder discoverability. The low user awareness and utilisation also confirm earlier reports by Echezona & Ugwuanyi (2019), which stressed that legal deposit collections in Nigeria have not been effectively promoted or integrated into user services.

Research Question 2: What challenges exist in the management and utilisation of legal deposit resources in the National Library of Nigeria?

Table 2: Challenges in Management and Utilisation of Legal Deposit Resources

Challenge	Frequency (n = 55)	Percentage (%)
-----------	--------------------	----------------

Inadequate digital infrastructure	44	80.0
Poor cataloguing and indexing practices	37	67.3
Low awareness among users	41	74.5
Lack of staff training in digital resource management	29	52.7
Poor compliance by publishers with legal deposit laws	34	61.8

The results indicate that the most significant challenge is inadequate digital infrastructure (80%), followed closely by low user awareness (74.5%) and poor cataloguing and indexing practices (67.3%). Weak compliance by publishers (61.8%) and lack of staff training (52.7%) were also highlighted.

These challenges show that the barriers are both technical and institutional. The findings are consistent with Ngulube (2016), who identified poor ICT infrastructure as a critical limitation in African legal deposit systems, and with Oladele (2021), who noted that without stronger compliance enforcement, publishers often ignore deposit obligations. The results confirm that unless these issues are addressed, legal deposit resources in Nigeria will remain underutilised despite their importance.

Research Question 3: What strategies can be adopted to improve the management and utilisation of legal deposit resources for enhanced user support in the National Library of Nigeria?

Table 3: Suggested Strategies for Improving Management and Utilisation

Suggested Strategy	Frequency (n = 55)	Percentage (%)
Digitization of legal deposit resources	47	85.5

Training of staff on digital tools and resource management	34	61.8
Public awareness campaigns for users	43	78.2
Enforcing publisher compliance with legal deposit laws	30	54.5
Creation of an online searchable database	39	70.9

Respondents strongly endorsed digitization (85.5%) as the most important strategy, alongside public awareness campaigns (78.2%) and the creation of an online searchable database (70.9%). Staff training (61.8%) and stronger enforcement of publisher compliance (54.5%) were also considered critical.

These findings echo Nwalo & Anasi (2021), who highlighted digitization and digital access as global best practices, and Adeniran & Adepoju (2020), who argued for stronger compliance measures in sub-Saharan Africa. In the Nigerian context, awareness campaigns and capacity building are especially crucial given the low levels of user knowledge and staff expertise revealed in this study. Collectively, these strategies would modernize the National Library's management of legal deposit resources and improve their utilisation for user support.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and discussion of this study on optimizing legal deposit resources in the National Library of Nigeria, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance effective management, utilization, and user support:

1. **Accelerate Digitization of Legal Deposit Collections:** The National Library should prioritize the digitization of all legal deposit materials to facilitate easier access, improve preservation, and enable remote use by a broader audience.
2. **Enhance Staff Capacity Building and Training:** Continuous training programs should be implemented to equip library staff with modern skills in digital resource management, cataloging, and information technology to improve the handling of legal deposit resources.
3. **Increase Public Awareness and User Sensitization:** The library should undertake sustained awareness campaigns, targeting academic institutions, researchers, and the general public, to educate them on the existence, importance, and access procedures of legal deposit resources.
4. **Develop and Maintain an Online Searchable Database:** Creating a dedicated, user-friendly online platform that allows for efficient search and retrieval of legal deposit materials will greatly enhance user support and resource utilization.
5. **Strengthen Legal Deposit Compliance and Enforcement:** Collaborate with government agencies and publishers to enforce legal deposit regulations strictly, ensuring that all publishers deposit copies of their works promptly as required by law.
6. **Secure Sustainable Funding and Infrastructure Investment:** Government and stakeholders should allocate adequate financial resources to upgrade technological infrastructure, including servers, digitization equipment, and internet connectivity, which are essential for modernizing legal deposit services.

7. **Foster Collaborative Partnerships:** The National Library should partner with local and international institutions, universities, and digital libraries to share best practices, technical expertise, and resources in legal deposit management

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the management and utilization of legal deposit resources at the National Library of Nigeria, with the aim of identifying challenges and proposing strategies to optimize user support. The findings reveal that despite possessing a rich collection of legal deposit materials, the National Library faces significant limitations, including inadequate digitization, poor cataloging practices, low user awareness, insufficient staff training, and weak enforcement of legal deposit regulations. These factors collectively impede the effective use of legal deposit resources and limit their potential contribution to research and knowledge dissemination.

However, the study also highlights promising pathways for improvement, notably through digitization, capacity building, enhanced awareness programs, and development of accessible digital platforms. Addressing these issues requires committed institutional support, sustainable funding, and stronger collaboration with stakeholders.

Optimizing legal deposit resources at the National Library of Nigeria is not only essential for preserving the nation's intellectual heritage but also critical for advancing academic research and public access to information. The recommended measures, if implemented, can transform

legal deposit services into a robust support system that meets the evolving needs of users and strengthens the library's role as a national knowledge custodian.

References

- Adeniran, P., & Adepoju, A. (2020). Legal deposit legislation and the preservation of national intellectual heritage in sub-Saharan Africa. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 1–15.
- Adebayo, I., & Musa, B. (2018). ICT application and administrative efficiency in Nigerian universities. *Journal of Educational Administration and Policy Studies*, 10(3), 19–27.
- Adebayo, O., & Toyobo, A. (2022). ICT integration and curriculum delivery in Nigerian tertiary institutions. *African Journal of Educational Technology*, 8(2), 44–57.
- Adedoyin, O. B., & Soykan, E. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic and online learning: The challenges and opportunities. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 28(7), 1–13.
- Ayoade, A., Adeyemi, O., & Osagie, J. (2023). Compliance with legal deposit laws among Nigerian publishers: Issues and prospects. *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*, 33(1), 23–37.
- British Library. (2020). *Legal deposit libraries: Access and preservation*. London: British Library Board.
- Echezona, R. I., & Ugwuanyi, C. F. (2019). Utilization of legal deposit resources in Nigerian libraries: Problems and prospects. *Nigerian Libraries*, 52(1), 15–27.
- Eze, S. C., & Obasi, E. (2022). ICT adoption and digital divide among tertiary institutions in Nigeria. *International Journal of Education and Development Using ICT*, 18(1), 141–155.
- International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). (2019). *Guidelines for legal deposit legislation*. The Hague: IFLA.
- Iloanusi, N., & Osuagwu, I. (2021). Barriers to ICT adoption in Northern Nigeria universities. *African Journal of Information and Communication*, 28(1), 1–18.
- Lawal, O., & Yusuf, F. (2020). ICT and library service delivery in Nigerian universities. *Library Hi Tech News*, 37(9), 15–22.
- Mcharazo, A. A. S., & Koopman, S. (2018). National libraries and legal deposit: Custodians of a nation's cultural heritage. *Library Review*, 67(6/7), 482–497.

- National Library of South Africa. (2021). *Access to legal deposit materials*. Pretoria: NLSA Publications.
- Ngulube, P. (2016). Managing and preserving digital resources in national libraries: The case of Africa. *Library Trends*, 65(1), 91–112.
- Nwalo, K. I. N., & Anasi, S. N. I. (2021). Digitisation and access to legal deposit resources in Nigeria: Challenges and prospects. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 53(2), 255–270.
- Obielodan, O., & Eze, S. (2021). ICT adoption in public sector administration: A Nigerian perspective. *Journal of Public Administration and Policy*, 14(3), 112–124.
- Ogbonna, B. O., Nwachukwu, V. C., & Okeke, R. (2021). ICT-driven library services in Africa: Challenges and opportunities. *African Journal of Library, Archives and Information Science*, 31(2), 145–158.
- Okeke, N. (2022). Raising awareness of legal deposit resources in Nigeria: A user-centered approach. *Library Management*, 43(4), 233–245.
- Okojie, V., & Lawal, R. (2019). National library services and the role of legal deposit in Nigeria. *Journal of Information Science Theory and Practice*, 7(4), 33–48.
- Oladele, B. (2021). Legal deposit and the preservation of national heritage: A review of Nigeria's experience. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 5561.
- Okonkwo, C., & Chukwuemeka, F. (2021). ICT in teaching and learning: Evidence from Nigerian tertiary institutions. *Journal of Educational Technology Research*, 9(2), 87–99.
- Ononiwu, C., & Okereke, H. (2021). Adoption of digital technologies in SMEs in Nigeria. *African Journal of Business Management*, 15(5), 112–123.