

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT PRACTICE AS INSTRUMENT FOR PROMOTION OF FREEDOM OF INFORMATION IN CROSS RIVER STATE BROADCASTING COOPERATION

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Abstract

This study was carried out to examine the role of library and promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Corporation. To achieve this purpose, two research questions were formulated for the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design with a population of 123 Professional Staff in the Cross River Broadcasting Corporation. The instrument for data collection was titled: "Information Management Practice as Instrument for Promotion of Freedom of Information Questionnaire" (IMPIPIQ) a validated, pilot was tested and found suitable for gatherings of data. The alpha coefficient index (α) was calculated from the pilot test after administration of the research. The reliability coefficient ranges from 0.73 to 0.81. The researcher administered the instruments with the help of six research assistants. Data was analyzed using simple percentage and frequencies of the respondents from the research questions. The study conclude the important of information access, information organization, and information preservation and information literacy on promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Cooperation. It was recommended amongst others that libraries should develop and maintain online information access platforms, Training programs should focus on information organization, retrieval, and literacy skills. As well as ensure sensitive information protection through effective preservation.

KEY: Library, Promotion, Freedom of Information, Cross River, Broadcasting, Cooperation

Introduction

In an era of information society, information is the most essential factor of production and wealth creation. How well an individual, organization and the entire society can harness, access, share, and make use of available information will ultimately decide their ability to generate economic growth and to enhance the quality of life for all (Matthew (2020). The information society has a great impact on issues bordered on information freedom. One way to capture the information environment is to consider how information activities take place amongst individuals and institutions that are involved in the day-to-day processes of information creation, dissemination and use in the society. Information broadly represented, can therefore be said to be any message to be conveyed from one source to another source or destination. Velmurugan and Ashork {2014} posited that information is a collection of data that has been processed, organized, or structured in a meaningful way to convey knowledge, ideas, or instructions. Information can be communicated through various media, such as text, images, audio, or video, and can be accessed and shared through multiple channels, such as books, journals, websites, and social media. At its core, information is a representation of reality, and it is used to convey knowledge about the world around us. It can be factual, subjective, or even fictional and can take many different forms depending on its purpose and audience.

The emergence of freedom of information legislation was in response to increasing dissatisfaction expressed against the secrecy surrounding government policy development and decision making. In Nigeria for instance, sections of such laws as the Official Secret Act and Criminal Code prohibit the disclosure of official secrets; and they stipulate penalty for any violation. For instance, Section 97 (1) of the Nigerian Criminal Code considers it a criminal offence for a public official to disclose any information in his or her possession. It states: Any person who, being employed in the public service, publishes or communicates any fact which comes to his knowledge by virtue of his office, and which it is his duty to keep secret, or any document which comes to his possession by virtue of his office and which it is his duty to keep secret, except to some person to whom he is bound to publish or communicate it, is guilty of a misdemeanour, and is liable to imprisonment for two years, (Ossai-Ugbah, 2012) The freedom of information act aims to make public records and information more freely available, and to protect public records and information in accordance with the public interest and protection of personal privacy. Information as contained in this act includes all records, documents and information stored in whatever form, including written, electronic, visual images, sound, audio recording, etc. which perfectly fits into the traditional roles of libraries (Singh 2014).

The Freedom of Information Act is an enabling law which gives access to public information. Simply interpreted, it means that every information, record or document held by public authorities is held in trust and must be provided on demand as long as such will

not hurt public interest or national security. The Freedom of information gives to individuals, societies, communities or corporate bodies “the right to ask” and “the right to know”. In a democracy, the public is expected to have access to information, through the media, the library and information centres or other means or sources; not only on how they are governed, but also on anything of interest to individual or group. The concept of freedom of information has a lot to do with librarianship, with the idea of open access to information. Open access in librarianship did not come easy, as Thomas Muir a respectable Scottish Advocate was arraigned in 1793 for lending a copy of Tom Paines “Right of man” and for advocating the reform of parliament. He was lucky to escape with his life, but he was banished to Botany Bay. It is therefore safe to say that issues concerning education, learning freedom and access to information cannot be fully discussed excluding the library as the public library act in Britain came into force in 1850, indicating the importance of libraries, while the education act was promulgated in 1870 (UN Human Rights Council. 2016.).

The organization of library resources is central to the mission of libraries worldwide. In earlier times, libraries were designed as store houses in order to preserve collections rather than organize and give access to them. Today’s’ libraries emphasizes organization and access to the information resources. The need for organization is driven by the fact that the acquired information resources must be accessed easily by the users of the libraries. Effective organization promotes efficiency and provides for effective use of the

resources, thereby increasing users' confidence in the library services. Moses, 2019) a well-organized library therefore, enables users to find information in their field of endeavour without stress.

According to Muhammed (2014), the need for organization of resources stems from the need to ease the retrieval of needed information for easy access and use. This, he said is necessary as information is contained in different types of sources either in printed and non - printed formats without limitation to location and time. Resource organization practice involves the choice of cataloguing rules and systems, types of catalogues, styles of bibliographic citations, classification schemes, the shelve arrangement, and the retrieval device to be employed for easy access to the library collections. The organization of library resources based on acceptable standard, will no doubt, save the time of the library patrons as access to the information resources will be easy and fast when it is well structured and preserved for easy access.

According to Osunride and Adetunla, (2017) preserving intellectual and cultural heritage becomes not only the academic commitment but also the moral responsibility of librarians, who are in charge since proper dissemination of library materials is only possible when the documents are in good and usable condition. Preservation of deteriorating information materials in libraries has become a global phenomenon to which libraries must aggressively respond if the mission of meeting the information needs of their patrons would be achievable in this era of dwindling budgetary allocation to libraries

Information literacy definition keeps evolving from time to time as information itself. This cannot be unconnected with the fact that information is dynamic and learning about it needs to be in-tandem with the recent development. According to American Library Association. (2015). Information literacy has become a major subject mainly in librarianship today while other fields sees it as something else or are not even aware of it. Having got an understanding of what information is, the term information literacy included a new word “literacy” for us to understand information literacy.

The users of information today are probably not having problem with availability of information but getting the most trusted and fair information from the clog of the information available. As technology grows also, so the various formats of presenting information is increasing, there is the need for information users to be able to utilise these information in their various forms. With the proliferation information so is the challenges of getting correct and comprehensive information, there is the need to know how to navigate the “information world” or the “information bank” when given adequate knowledge on the extent or organisation, preservation as well as having indebt knowledge on how to evaluate it content. Hence the study is set to examine information management practice and instrument for promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Corporation, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Freedom of information is the freedom of persons, or people to publish and have access to information. Access to information is the ability for an individual to seek, receive and impact information effectively. Despite the adoption of freedom of information laws; users are often unfamiliar with the information retrieval tools that create access, organize preserved as well as evaluate the information content so as to ensure unrestricted access and to create a transparency at the core of freedom of information or are unwilling to recognize them in practice. Librarians often do not make effective use of freedom of information laws for a multitude of reasons: official failure to create adequate awareness guide the user on accessibility and organizing the resources in a simplified form which may not hinder or delay information seekers. It is on this note that the researcher is carrying out this study to examine information management practice and promotion freedom of information in Cross River Broadcasting Cooperation

Research Question

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- i.* What is the role of information organization in promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Cooperation?
- ii.* What is the role of information preservation on in promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Cooperation?
- iii.* What is the role of information literacy in promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Cooperation?

Literature Review

Information organization and Freedom of Information

According to Muhammed, (2017) library materials, are the organizing principle with detailed subject classification system available for searching in an online "catalogue." For journal articles, the organizing mechanism is typically an online indexing and/or abstracting system that allows researchers to access information by subject or by some other scheme. For newspaper articles, the organizing mechanism is typically an online indexing and/or abstracting system that allows researchers access in a variety of means. The one thing common to all of these access systems is organization. People, experts in their fields, have taken the time and trouble to organize access to all the stored information that they can get their hands on in order to make it searchable and accessible to other people which has a direct link to information freedom. In short, accessing good information is not just as simple as pointing your browser to Google or Yahoo. Computers can help you to organize information and can even automate indexing and cataloging, but in most library and research database systems accesses to information are ultimately created by other people. In short, finding information deliberately rather than serendipitously relies on many people describing myriad bits of information in a systematic manner that can be addressed consistently in an organized system.

Information preservation and freedom of information

Information has been recorded throughout time in a wide variety of formats as human knowledge, ability, and skills developed (Oluwaniyi, 2015) . Cave paintings, papyrus

scrolls, handwritten manuscripts, and visual or sound recordings in various languages and formats provide information to people and allow knowledge acquired by one generation to be passed to the following generation. Along with the oral tradition, images, sound, and text have assisted in the transfer of personal, educational, political, social, or cultural information. These materials comprise our collective memory and are valuable and necessary to a society or group of people (Matthew (2020). It has been impossible to save all information created throughout the history of humankind. The beginning of the twenty-first century represents an era of unprecedented growth in the creation of recorded materials. Consequently, institutions that serve as custodians of cultural and historical information must make decisions regarding its collection, preservation, and conservation. Information devices for preservation encompass a variety of formats, such as paper, books, photographs, and sound recordings.

Information literacy and freedom of information

Information literacy contributes to the effective use of library resources (Umuhoza, 2021). Information literacy skills are the ability to place, manage, critically assess and use the information to solve problems, conduct researches and make decisions. Information literacy skills involve the ability to identify when information is needed and having the ability to efficiently locate, accurately evaluate, effectively use, and communicate information in various formats. An information literate person requires different technical skills such as the skills to select the information needed, to locate information, to retrieve useful information, to evaluate information, and to use information appropriately to

complete a specified task (Nwezeh, 2011). . Odede (2018) investigated the Information literacy self-efficacy in the use of print and electronic information resources with regard to information freedom in Cross River state, Nigeria.

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The descriptive survey gives the researcher an accurate description of what people in some target group do or think about a phenomenon through the use of surveys to gather data about varying subjects. The population of the study comprise of 123 professional staff in all the eight divisions in Cross River Broadcasting Corporation. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire, titled “Library and Freedom of Information Questionnaire” (LFIQ). Items in the instruments were generated during the course of reviewing literature and were developed to obtain data for testing the formulated hypotheses. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (A and B). Section A was designed to receive information on the personal characteristics of the respondents such as gender, age, etc. Section B was structured to elicit information to address the research questions, based on the sub-variables of the study, which includes: information organization, information preservation and information literacy education under a four point-Likert-type scale. Data obtained for the study was analyzed using simple percentage and frequencies of the respondents from the research questions.

General description of research variables

The data collected for this study were on two main group of variables: independent and dependent variable. The independent variables are; information organization, information literacy, and information preservation, while the dependent variable is promotion of freedom of information. One hundred and twenty-three (123) questionnaires were produced and administered. All administered questionnaires were returned in usable form indicating a 100% return rate

Table 1. What is the role of information organization in promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Cooperation?

S/N	Items	SA		A		D		SD	
		Fqy	%	Fqy	%	Fqy	%	Fqy	%
1	Libraries plays a crucial role in organizing information to facilitate access to information	75	61%	48	39.0%	---	---	---	---
2	Effective information organization in libraries enhances the promotion of freedom of information	82	66.7%	41	33.3%	---	---	---	---
3	Proper shelving of library resources enhance the promotion of freedom of information	62	50.4%	44	35.8%	12	9.7%	5	4.1%
4	information retrieval tools (cataloguing and classification enhance the promotion of freedom of information	59	48%	53	43.1%	9	7.3%	2	1.6%
5	Indexing and abstracting services	56	45.5%	53	43.1%	10	8.1%	4	3.3%

	enhance the promotion of freedom of information								
6	Bibliographic services enhance the promotion of freedom of information	47	38.2%	61	49.6%	9	7.3%	6	4.9%

Field Survey Work, 2024

Results and Discussions

The result in Table 1 showed that the percentage for the responses of the respondents on information organization in promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Cooperation for all the items 1 - 6 had a ratings of 100% – 86.2%. The percentage ratings are above the criterion level of 2.50 for accepting an item indicating that libraries are acknowledged as essential institutions for information organization and access, underscoring their importance in promoting freedom of information. Whereas, results of the analysis on information organization and promotion of freedom of information reveals that information organization plays a crucial role in empowering individuals through free access to information and retrieval systems. This results is in line with the findings of Lankes (2011) who found that effective information organization facilitates knowledge creation and sharing. The study concludes that Information organization is critical for community engagement and participation, and that libraries should prioritize user-centered information organization. Similarly, Bates (2010) in his study found that information organization and retrieval skills are essential for effective information seeking. The study

concludes that information organization systems should prioritize user needs, and that libraries should develop information literacy programs.

Table 2: What is the role of information preservation on in promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Cooperation?

S/N	Items	SA		A		D		SD	
		Fqy	%	Fqy	%	Fqy	%	Fqy	%
1	Libraries serve a cultural role in preserving and organizing artifacts and ideas	91	74.0%	32	26.0%	---	---	---	---
2	Effective information preservation ensures the long-term availability of information for public access	87	70.7%	36	29.3%	---	---	---	---
3	Information preservation policies guarantee the authenticity and integrity of preserved information	52	42.3%	12	9.7%	43	35.0%	16	13.0%
4	Digital preservation methods enhance the accessibility of historical records	64	52.0%	29	23.6%	19	15.4%	11	8.9%
5	The integration of technology in information preservation has improved information	96	78.0%	27	22.0%	---	---	---	---

	retrieval								
6	Information preservation ensures the protection of sensitive information from unauthorized access	75	61.0%	23	18.7%	19	15.4%	6	4.9%

Field Survey Work, 2024

Results and Discussions

The result in Table 2 showed that the percentage for the responses of the respondents on information preservation and promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Cooperation for all the items 1 - 6 which had a ratings of 100% – 52%, is above the criterion level of 2.50 The unanimous agreement underscores technology's positive impact on information retrieval, indicating that technology integration improves information preservation and retrieval. This results align with the findings of Lankes (2011) who found that libraries are key institutions for preserving knowledge, promoting information literacy, and fostering community engagement. While a notable portion (48%) of the respondents' do not, indicating a split opinions, which suggest uncertainty about preservation policies' effectiveness and a significant minority had a ratings of 24.4 % -20.3% of the respondents' do not. This implies that effective preservation ensures sensitive information remains secure.

What is the role of information literacy in promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Cooperation?

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
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		Fqy	%	Fqy	%	Fqy	%	Fqy	%
1	Information literacy education enhances citizens' ability to critically evaluate information	71	57.7%	52	42.3%	---	---	---	---
2	Information literacy skills are essential for effective utilization of freedom of freedom of information	68	55.3%	47	38.2%	6	4.9%	2	1.6%
3	Information literacy education promotes critical thinking and media literacy	98	79.7%	22	17.9%	3	2.4%	---	---
4	Information literacy education empowers individuals to make informed decisions	73	59.3%	42	34.1%	5	4.1%	3	2.4%
5	Information literacy skills enables citizens' to identify biased or misleading information	66	53.7%	32	26.0%	18	14.6%	7	5.7%
6	Information literacy education supports the development of an informed and engaged citizenry	44	35.8%	23	18.7%	29	23.6%	27	22.0%

Field Survey Work, 2024

Results and Discussions

The result in Table 3 showed that the percentage for the responses of the respondents on Information literacy education and promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Cooperation for all the item 1-6 which had a rating of 100% -52%, is

above the criterion level of 2.50. While a significant minority (45.6%) of the respondents do not. The split opinions suggest uncertainty about information literacy's impact on civic engagement, indicating that further research is needed to understand information literacy's relationship with civic engagement. This is in tandem with the study by UNESCO (2015) that found out that information literacy education promotes freedom of information. It was concluded that information literacy is essential for informed citizenship, and that libraries should prioritize information literacy education globally. Furthermore, Hepburn and Poston (2017) carried out a study to investigate "Online information access and civic engagement" the study found that information literacy education fosters civic engagement. The study concludes that information literacy supports informed decision-making. The study recommends that libraries should integrate civic education into information literacy programs.

Findings

- i. Libraries information organization plays a crucial role in empowering individuals through free access to information and retrieval systems.
- ii. The study's findings also reveals that libraries are instrumental in preserving knowledge and promoting freedom of information
- iii. Finally, the study's findings reveals that information literacy education is instrumental in cultivating critical thinking, informed decision-making, and freedom of information.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- i. Libraries should develop and maintain online information access platforms.

- ii. Prioritize effective information organization and retrieval systems.
- iii. Training programs should focus on information organization, retrieval, and literacy skills.
- iv. Libraries should invest in technology to enhance information accessibility and retrieval systems.
- v. Policy makers should recognize the importance of libraries in promoting freedom of information and allocate sufficient resources.
- vi. Integrate information literacy education into educational curricula.
- vii. Develop clear policies for information preservation.
- viii. Ensure sensitive information protection through effective preservation.

Conclusion

The study examined the role of libraries in promotion of freedom of information in Cross River State Broadcasting Corporation, Calabar. The study's findings unequivocally demonstrate the vital importance of libraries, information organization, information preservation, and information literacy education in promoting freedom of information. Acknowledging the critical roles of libraries and information professionals, we can foster an informed, engaged and inclusive society, ultimately promoting freedom of information, and ensuring the continued relevance and importance of libraries in the digital age.

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