

Knowledge and Use of Information Retrieval Tools By Lawyers at Miyetti Law Abuja, Nigeria.

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***Abstract** - This study investigated knowledge and use of information retrieval tools by lawyers at Miyetti Law, Abuja. Three research questions were framed for the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised 30 lawyers who were all studied without sampling as the population size was manageable. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. The data collected for the research questions were analyzed using frequency, percentage and mean. The result revealed that, lawyers are aware of various information retrieval tools available in the library which include indexes, search engines, shelve guides and OPAC but lack awareness on the availability of bibliographies and abstracts. Result also revealed that lawyers have high level of knowledge on the use the information retrieval tools and utilize them to a great extent in locating information in the library. It was recommended that lawyers should be sensitized further on the uses of other information retrieval tools in the library including abstract and bibliography. Law libraries should evaluate their lawyers' information retrieval skill from time to time as to know where the help of librarians are needed. Law libraries should also conduct SWOT analysis to discover why the information resources are underutilized.*

Keywords: Information Retrieval Tools, Miyetti Law, Lawyers, Knowledge and Use

Introduction

Miyetti Law is a uniquely multifaceted law firm which is systematically structured with resilient lawyers and experts who are consistently committed and dedicated to meeting every legal need of clients. The Legal team of Miyetti Law have over two decades of practice experience and advanced degrees, and have represented clients in Supreme, Court of appeal and High Courts, worked in human rights organizations, founded non-governmental organizations, engaged in several Pro bono services, worked for national and multi-national organizations and companies, taught at Law Schools in Nigeria and Abroad. Miyetti Law engages in transactional work, business planning, interfacing with government entities and individual clients. Advocacy and legal advices to clients around the globe are part of the services rendered by the firm. Miyetti Law supplies a well rounded assistance by providing a platform where individuals, businesses, charity organizations and government agencies can better achieve their goals.

Miyetti Law Library at the cutting-edge of the 21st Century provides its firm and the legal communities a palatable access point that integrates all genres of resources and equipment that meet diverse research needs. Ever since the Library was established in 2015, several steps have been taken in surveying the Lawyers' information needs within and outside Nigeria which were very necessary in determining what resources and equipment would be

required in order to emerge a leader and “one stop shop” for legal information services in Nigeria. The Library, first and foremost, recognized the importance of creating formidable legal resources with up-to-date contents and retrieval tools necessary for accessing and retrieving information. These are the first requirements that the library put into consideration and ensured that resources available are current, overlapping and representative of diverse areas of Law.

Miyetti Law Library resources represent a comprehensive genre of legal materials that include Nigerian Law Reports, British Law Reports, Law Reports of the Commonwealth, other foreign and English Law Reports; Practitioners’ Textbooks in diverse areas of Law; Law Peer Reviewed Journals; Statutory instruments; International and Local Agencies’ Publications and Online Databases such as Westlaw, Practical Law, Heinonline, LexisNexis, Legalpedia, Law Pavilion and other e-portals and open sources.

The digital exploit of Miyetti Law library attract high patronage from users across the region. Meanwhile, the central focus of the library is to employ available technologies capable of solving information puzzles within the ambit of legal profession. The library employed the latest Mac desktops connected to 24hours internet. Databases of both foreign and local jurisdictions were made available to enable users gain access to any form of legal documents. WIFI was also made available to users for free internet connection to their PCs. In its commitment to remain the best law library nationwide, many digital projects are still ongoing in the library and would be launched very soon. Interestingly, Miyetti Law Library is manned by a team of trained and experienced librarians with track records. As crucial in legal information industry, the librarians of Miyetti Law Library undergo continuous training and workshop within and outside Nigeria. The librarians also attend International Bar Association (IBA) Conferences to enable them get abreast with innovations in legal information management.

Legal team at Miyetti Law publishes a law journal with articles focused on the specific areas of law that matter most to the clients. Whether this is immigration, energy policy, international legal developments or corporate law, the firm follows the important developments in all fields clients are interested in and provides factual analysis of new developments that shape and affect adjudication of justice (Abubakar, 2020).

The need to equip lawyers and other legal researchers with knowledge of information retrieval tools is paramount to librarians as this will facilitate maximum utilization of legal information resources available in the library. Enhancing knowledge of lawyers on the use of information retrieval tools will reduce the amount of time wasted in searching for information.

Statement of the Problem

Research is no doubt the bedrock of successful legal profession. At Miyetti Law, the lawyers are conversant with research and have excellent knowledge of legal resources that support their position and also understand which database in the library can help them achieve their objectives. Miyetti Law has a state of the art research – based in-house library and full-time lawyers who carry out research projects in the library. The library matches international standard and contains all that is required to embark on any comprehensive research including information retrieval tools. To carry out effective research in any library in the information age hinges on ease of access to information resources facilitated by available information

retrieval tools. These factors certainly formed a nexus that inspires lawyers, researchers and other users of legal information to utilize library very often.

Despite the rich information retrieval tools and abundance of library resources in the library, it was observed that the resources are underutilized. The underutilization of library resources has been a recurring issue in the library which the researcher set out to examine the extent of lawyers' knowledge on the use of information retrieval tools available for easy access and utilization of legal information in the library. Technically, it seems impossible to fully access library resources when knowledge on the use of information retrieval tools are inadequate.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate knowledge and use of information retrieval tools by Lawyers in Miyetti Law, Abuja. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Examine the awareness of availability of information retrieval tools in the library
2. Ascertain' the Lawyers level of knowledge on the use of information retrieval tools in the library
3. Investigate the extent of use of information retrieval tools in the library

Research Questions

1. How aware are you of available information retrieval tools in your law firm library?
2. What is your level of knowledge on the use of information retrieval tools in your law library?
3. To what extent do you utilize information retrieval tools in your law library?

Review of Literature

Most lawyers seem to lack knowledge of the significance of information retrieval tools, as most of them believe their ability to access information by merely browsing through the shelves or navigation of library databases suffice in conducting library research. Many lawyers wallow through oceans of information in the library only to find it difficult to locate relevant and accurate information they need. Locating any kind of information in the databases or library domain requires effective knowledge and use of information retrieval tools. Opijnen and Santos (2017) state that the advancements of the information era and the open data movement gives astronomical rise in the number of legal documents published online but there is no corresponding accessibility and searchability with this growth rate. This leads to underutilization of legal resources and undermining knowledge acquisition possibilities and even access to justice. In a nutshell, information retrieval is refers to the mechanism that aid organization, location and retrieval of encoded information in information systems. Chimah, Unagha and Nwokocha, (2010) describe information retrieval as a process that involves the retrieval of information from a collection or database in response to an information problem. Information retrieval involves the act of searching for needed information through a body of systematic and mechanized structure.

It can be said that information retrieval is a process through which reference application is utilized to access relevant information. Echem and Udo-anyanwu (2018) opined that the effectiveness of a library a learning centre is determined by its ability to provide the users with the necessary tools capable of accessing and retrieving information. With information

retrieval tools, information seekers are enabled to quickly and efficiently search, find/or locate and retrieve their needed information resources.

Information retrieval involves the process of selecting information from storage devices or carriers. However, the process is dependent in physical mechanism in library collections and or computers/technologies information system designs. The legal information environment of the digital age requires basic knowledge and understanding of retrieval tools to facilitate access to information. It has become compelling to equip users with knowledge about access tools available to them in order to assist them explore opportunities provided in a new information environment (Afebende and Nna-Etuk, 2019).

Information retrieval tools are systems designed to guarantee ease of access or retrieval of information in an organized information record or databases directing users to particular types of information sources. Some of the traditional tools in libraries include catalogues, Indexes, abstracts and bibliographies. In recent times due to developments in ICTs, computerized access tools have begun to offer full-text access to digital documents in addition to bibliographic records (Afebende and Nna-Etuk, 2019; Nwosu and Ottong (2014) & Ojedokun (2007) .

Several authors in their studies discovered notable information retrieval tools that users around the world are conversant with and utilize to a great extent including catalogues, Indexes, abstracts and bibliographies, internet search engines, shelf-guide, web-based information retrieval system, (Ademodi and Akintowide, 2012; Ojedokun, 2007; Nnadozie, 2007 & Okafor, 2006). As insinuated, the conventional system of retrieving particular bits of information no longer fills the needs of many people. Lawyers looking for a wide range of literature on a particular subject can search through web-based indexes, abstracts, and databases, Online Public Access Catalogue and bibliographies.

Several researchers (lawyers) are fully aware of the available retrieval tools in the library as these provide references to relevant magazines and journal articles including cases, legislations and other statutory information (Rowley and Farrow, 2000). As insinuated, the conventional system of retrieving particular bits of information no longer fills all the needs of many people. Lawyers looking for a wide range of literature on a particular subject can search through web-based indexes, abstracts, and databases, Online Public Access Catalogue and bibliographies. These sources provide references to relevant magazine and journal articles. Searching traditional indexes of print publications has been aided by computerized databases, but still usually requires time consuming serial searching of databases after the other, and then moving on to other methods of searching for internet sources (Sinha, 2018).

Searching for and locating relevant information according to Chimah, Unagha and Nwokocha (2010) requires careful thought and strategy. In as much as finding answers to queries by looking through general reference sources, such as encyclopedias, dictionaries, atlases, directories, and other materials that are usually located near the library's reference desk, information retrieval provide access to sources that present overviews of the subject that may lead to more detailed source of information.

Retrieving information by lawyers becomes more effective with adequate knowledge of different formats of information storage. Unagha (2010) opines that retrieving information requires consideration of the type of media, or storage device, used to store information; the media's storage capacity; the speed of access and information transfer to and from the storage

media, the number of times new information can be written to the media; and how the media interacts with the information system. Lawyers both practitioners and academics regard themselves as “learned”, of course, It is not out of place to expect such an information oriented discipline as Law and legal professionals to be acquainted with information retrieval tools.

However, to limit the role of legal information retrieval within daily legal practice to just finding the court decisions relevant to the case at hand underestimates the complexities of the law and of legal information seeking behaviour. Any legal information retrieval system built without sufficient knowledge, not just of the actual legal information needs but also of the ‘juristic mind’, is apt to fail” (Opijnen and Santos, 2017).

Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This design was adopted for the study because it was considered the appropriate method in obtaining reliable information on the characteristic, features, beliefs, opinions, perceptions or facts about a given population (Nworgu, 2015).

Area of the Study

The area of the study is Maitama Abuja, Nigeria. Maitama is one of the most serene and developed towns in Federal Capital Territories, Abuja in North Central Nigeria with numerous government and private organizations.

Population and Sampling Techniques

There was no sampling in this study as the population size of 30 lawyers was considered manageable.

Instrument for Data Collection

The main instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire tagged Questionnaire on Knowledge and Use of Information Retrieval Tools among Lawyers in Miyetti Law (KUIRTLAM) The items in the questionnaire were designed by the investigators. The questionnaire was administered to lawyers in Miyetti Law. The items were designed to examine the knowledge and use of information retrieval tools among lawyers. The questionnaire was validated by academic lawyers, one from Baze University and two from Nile University all in Abuja.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was trial- tested on 20 lawyers apart those used for the study. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the items of the instrument to ensure validity. The reliability coefficient for knowledge and use of information retrieval tools were 0.80, 0.78 and 0.75, respectively which was found reliable and adequate for the study.

Method of Data Collection

Copies of the questionnaire were administered to, and retrieved from the lawyers at Miyetti Law by the researcher. In effect, a total of 30 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the lawyers and were duly completed and used for the study, giving a response rate of 100%.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using frequency, percentage and mean. The question one required “Aware or Not Aware” answer from the respondents analyzed with frequency and percentage. The question two and three were analyzed with mean using 4 point rating scale. Consequently, decision was taken based on real limit of numbers as follows:

0.50 – 1.49 Very Low (VL, 1 point)	0.50 – 1.49 Not At All (NA, 1 point)
1.50 – 2.49 Low (L, 2 points)	1.50 –2.49 Little Extent (LE, 2 points)
2.50 – 3.49 High (H, 3 point)	2.50 – 3. 49 Great Extent (GE, 3 points)
3.50 – 4.00 Very High (VH, 4 points)	3.50 – 4.0 Very Great Extent (VGE,4 points)

Data Analysis

The study presents, analyzes and interprets results from the data collected through the questionnaire.

Research Question 1: How aware are you of available information retrieval tools in your law firm’s library?

Table 1: *Awareness of available information retrieval tools by lawyers in law firm library*

IRT	Response Option	Frequency	Percentage (%)
OPAC	Aware	26	87
	Not Aware	4	13
Search Engines	Aware	30	100
	Not Aware	0	0
Indexes	Aware	28	93
	Not Aware	2	7
Abstracts	Aware	11	37
	Not Aware	19	63
Bibliographies	Aware	14	47
	Not Aware	16	53
Shelve guide	Aware	27	90
	Not Aware	3	10

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 1 reports the respondents’ opinion on the awareness of available information retrieval tools in law firm library. The result reports that lawyers are aware of the availability of OPAC (87%), Search engines (100%), Indexes (93%) and Shelve guide (90%). The result has further shown that lawyers are not aware of availability of Abstract (63%) and Bibliographies (53%) respectively. This result concludes that lawyers are aware of majority of the available information retrieval tools in the library.

Research Question 2: What is your level of knowledge on the use of information retrieval tools in your law library?

Table 2: *Level of knowledge on the use of information retrieval tools by lawyers in law firm library*

S/N	Item	VH	H	L	VL	Total	Mean	Ranking	Decision
1	Search Engines	18	12	0	0	30	3.6	1 st	VH
2	Indexes	14	10	4	2	30	3.2	2 nd	H
3	Shelve guides	9	13	6	2	30	3.0	3 rd	H
4	OPAC	10	8	7	5	30	2.8	4 th	H
5	Bibliographies	6	7	10	7	30	2.4	5 th	L
6	Abstract	8	4	10	8	30	2.4	5 th	L

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 2 reports the respondents' opinion on the level of knowledge on the use of information retrieval tools by lawyers in law firm library. The result shows the lawyers' knowledge on the use of information retrieval tools in the library such as Search engines (with mean score of 3.6, rank 1st and very high), and Indexes (with a mean score of 3.2, rank 2nd and high). While knowledge on the use of information retrieval tools such as Shelve guides (with a mean score of 3.0, rank 3rd and high), OPAC (with a mean score of 2.8, rank 4th and high) Meanwhile, level of lawyers' knowledge on the use of information retrieval tools indicated low such as Bibliographies (with a mean of 2.4, rank 5th and low) and Abstract (with a mean of 2.4, rank 5th and low) respectively. This result concludes that Lawyers were reported to have knowledge on the use of majority of information retrieval tools available in the library to a high level.

Research Question 3: To what extent do you utilize information retrieval tools in your law library?

Table 3: *Extent to which lawyers utilize information retrieval tools in law firm library*

S/N	Item	VGE	GE	LE	NA	Total	Mean	Ranking	Decision
1	Indexes	15	11	3	1	30	3.2	1 st	GE
2	Shelve guides	12	12	4	2	30	3.1	2 nd	GE
3	Search Engines	12	10	5	3	30	3.0	3 rd	GE
4	OPAC	5	8	10	7	30	2.7	4 th	GE
5	Abstracts	5	5	11	9	30	2.2	5 th	LE
6	Bibliographies	2	6	9	13	30	1.9	6 th	LE

Source: Field work (2020)

Table 3 reports the respondents' opinion on the extent to which lawyers utilize information retrieval tools in law firm library. The result shows that lawyers use information retrieval tools in the library such as Indexes (with mean score of 3.2, rank 1st to a high extent), and Shelve guides (with a mean score of 3.1, rank 2nd to a high extent). While the extent to which lawyers utilize information retrieval tools in law firm library indicates Search engines (with a mean score of 3.0, rank 3rd to a high extent), Bibliographies (with a mean score of 2.7, rank 4th to a high extent). However, Lawyers have shown low utilization of information retrieval tools such as Abstracts (with a mean of 2.2, rank 5th to a low extent) and OPAC (with a mean of 1.9, rank 6th to a low extent). Result concludes that Lawyers to a high extent utilize most of the information retrieval tools available in the library.

Discussion, Recommendations and Conclusions

Discussion of findings, implications of the study, recommendations, limitations of the study and conclusions were presented according to the objectives of the study and the research questions.

Discussion of Findings

With respect to data analysis in research question one, result of the finding shows that lawyers are aware of majority of the available information retrieval tools in the library. The finding of this research question one is in agreement with Rowley and Farrow (2000) on awareness of available information retrieval tools by lawyers in law firm library which found that several researchers (lawyers) are fully aware of the available retrieval tools in the library as these provide references to relevant magazines and journal articles including cases, legislations and other statutory information.

The result of the analysis for research question two shows that lawyers have high level of knowledge on the use of information retrieval tools including indexes, search engines, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and shelve guides. Finding is in line with Ademodi and Akintowide (2012); Ojedokun (2007); Nnadozie (2007) and Okafor (2006) which found that information retrieval tools that users are conversant with around the world include catalogues, Indexes, abstracts and bibliographies, internet search engines, shelf-guide, web-based information retrieval system.

Analysis on research question three reveals that lawyers utilize information retrieval tools to a great extent which include indexes, search engines, and shelve guides and OPAC. In agreement with the finding, Ademodi and Akintowide (2012); Ojedokun (2007); Nnadozie (2007) and Okafor (2006) found that users utilize catalogues, indexes, abstracts and bibliographies, internet search engines, shelf-guide, web-based information retrieval system to a great extent.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher came up with the following recommendations:

1. Lawyers should be sensitized further on the uses of other information retrieval tools in the library including abstract and bibliography.
2. Law libraries should evaluate their lawyers' information retrieval skill from time to time as to know where the help of librarians are needed.
3. Law libraries should also conduct SWOT analysis to discover why the information resources are underutilized.

Conclusion

Research forms an indispensable and continuous circle of activity in the life of a legal practitioner. The library itself becomes the centre for research activities. Lawyers congregate to the library to access authoritative sources that provide their legal information needs. Information retrieval tools enable the lawyers to locate, retrieve and use the needed information in various formats. These information retrieval tools are index, abstract, search engines, shelve guides, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) or library card catalogue,

bibliographies. The study's results demonstrate that the lawyers at Miyetti law are aware of most information retrieval tools available in their firm's library with high level of knowledge in the use of the tools. They also utilize most of the retrieval tools to a great extent but lack knowledge and use of few retrieval tools.

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