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# **MANNING OF ACADEMIC LAW LIBRARIES BY LAWYERS: IMPERATIVE FOR BEST LEGAL INFORMATION DELIVERY IN NIGERIAN ACADEMIC LAW LIBRARIES**

**BY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Academic Law Libraries are special libraries with special collections for a specialized field or discipline established to serve specific professionals and researchers who are law students, law lecturers, legal researchers and other faculty members. Law Library is the nexus and the heart of any faculty of law; it is a pivotal upon which legal education is built. Consequently, the two statutory regulatory bodies responsible for legal education in Nigeria: the National Universities Commission and the Nigerian Council of Legal Education respectively, place a high premium on Law Library building, equipment, facilities, availability of current and adequate information resources as well as the management of the library and its information resources to ensure best information delivery system. In order for academic Law Libraries to be well utilized, there is need to ensure that academic Law Libraries are managed by qualified Law Librarians. This paper discussed, and justified the imperativeness and importance of manning of faculties of law Libraries by qualified Law Librarians for effective legal education in Nigeria. It also stated reasons why some faculties of Law Libraries in Nigeria are not still being managed by Law Librarians and to know the standard laid down by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Nigerian Council of Legal Education (NCLE) for faculties of law Libraries in Nigeria.

Key Words: Academic Law Libraries, Legal Education, Law Librarian, Nigerian Universities.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Law program not only in Nigeria but, all over the world is a specialized field, the language; writing and presentation are unique such that only people within the legal profession can offer help to unravel its misery in given legal advice on any matter that involves the law. To write good legal briefs, present legal arguments in courts of law and to provide legal information to judges, lawyers and law students

depends on the availability of legal information. Legal information is an indispensable tool for judges, lawyers, law lecturers, law students as well as all stakeholder in legal parlance without which it would be practically impossible to dispense their duties and activities effective, expeditiously and judiciously.

In most high courts in Nigeria today because of the indispensability of legal information, Legal Researchers who are Legal Practitioners are employed to help the courts and judges to source for relevant legal information in law books, Statutory books, Law Reports, Legal Treaties, Government Publications, etc. Well established and standardized law firms also employ Law Librarians to manage collections in their libraries. If Judges and Lawyers who are themselves trained and groomed in the knowledge of the law still see the need to employ Law Librarians who are lawyers to manage their libraries, it is much more necessary and germane that only lawyers are employed in all faculties of law in Nigeria to be in charge of law libraries.

By my experience as a lawyer as well as a law librarian, I have come to realize the reason why a law librarian is also a law lecturer howbeit in more silence and conservative manner. On several occasion students after leaving classrooms will come straight to my office to make enquires on certain principles of law; the origin of these principles, the locus classicus cases on these principles and how these principles have evolved over the years. With all seriousness they want the law librarian not only to suggest the books, law reports, and means through which they can get the best legal information materials to consult that will demystify what they were taught in their classes but also to have quality time to explain to them again what they were taught in class.

From the foregoing therefore, the agitation or demands by some stakeholders in legal education in Nigeria that is only lawyers or people who have LL.B in law should be in charge of law libraries of all faculties of law is justifiable and the need for the proper implementation of this cannot be overemphasized as it has an impact on our legal education.

The aim of this paper is to discuss, bring to fore and justify the imperativeness and importance of manning of faculties of law Libraries by qualified Law Librarians for effective legal education in Nigeria, to know the reasons why some faculties of law Libraries in Nigeria are not still being managed by Law Librarians and to know the standard laid down by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Nigerian Council of Legal Education (NCLE) for faculties of law Libraries in Nigeria and to point out the impact of managing the law libraries by qualified law librarians on legal education.

## **LEGAL EDUCATION**

There are two statutory bodies guiding and regulating legal education in Nigeria. The first is the National Universities Commission (NUC) established under the National Universities Commission Act (LFN) 2014. According to Section 1 of the Act, the National Universities Commission advises the Federal and State Governments in any matter relating to establishment of universities and their developments. According to Section 4(b) (ii) of the Act, the function of the Commission shall include recommendations for the establishment and location of new universities as and when considered necessary and in accordance with the Commission's approved guidelines.

Section 10 (1) of the Education (National Minimum Standards And Establishment Of Institutions) Act CAP E3 (LFN) 2014 also provides that “The power to lay down minimum standards for all universities and other institutions of higher learning in the Federation and the accreditation of their degrees and other academic awards is hereby vested in the National Universities Commission after due consultation with the institutions concerned, after the President through the Minister has given his approval”. According to Section 11(a-g) of the Act, the purpose of establishing any higher institution of learning shall be:

- the acquisition of knowledge for the sustenance of individual and the society;
- to produce intellectuals capable of understanding their individual' environment;
- to produce independent individuals with necessary skills as members of their communities;
- to contribute to national development through capacity building;
- to adopt national uniformity in the admission of undergraduates into Nigerian universities;

Section 24(g) provides that the appropriate authority shall have the power to issue guidelines to relevant institutions in respect of the laboratories, workshops, technical drawing-rooms, typewriting rooms, model workshops, and libraries to be established by the university.

The NUC Benchmarks Minimum Academic Standard (BMAS) for all disciplines in the Nigerian University System which was born out of engagement of the services of professors in Nigerian University System in 2004 to review the Minimum Academic Standard of 1989 also laid down the objectives and purpose of NUC in visiting universities to ensure that any university in Nigeria seeking approval and accreditation of academic programs has adequate and sufficient facilities both in staff capacities, equipment and amenities necessary to offer the best education in term of theory and practical knowledge to all students admitted in Nigerian universities in in order to produce graduates who would be problem solvers and great inventors in their chosen careers.

According to Okonkwo (2016) BMAS' objective of accrediting any university in Nigeria are to uphold

the principles laid down in BMAS' document in order to assure international community that Nigerians graduates are competent in their fields, that all programs offered in Nigerian universities are of high standard, and that Nigerian graduates are suitable anywhere in the world for employments.

According to BMAS, adequacy of teaching staff in numbers, competence and standard of instruction in all subject areas of the programs will be taken into consideration. The adequacy of the teaching staff determines the adequacy of the program as the instructional goals and objectives are achieved only to the level of Competency and vision of the teaching staff. NUC panel shall also visit the library in course of their visitation for accreditation purpose to ensure that there are adequate information resources both in print and electronic forms to support learning, teaching, and research of students and other members of the university community.

A legal practitioner is always part of the NUC visitation panel whenever there is an invitation by any university to have a law program approved or accredited. The reason for this is undoubtedly to uphold and maintain a high standard in regard to legal education in Nigeria. It is expected that any university intending to start law program must have the required number of teachers (this of course include the qualification of the proper person, an academic staff to manage Law Libraries), good faculty building, internet facilities and standard Law Library with adequate legal information resources both in print and electronic format, local and foreign legal databases.

Another and most important statutory body responsible for legal education in Nigeria is the Council of Legal Education established under Legal Education (Consolidation, Etc.) Act CAP L10 (LFN) 2004. Section 1(1) of the Act states that there shall be a body to be known as the Council of Legal Education referred to as "the Council".... According to Subsection 2, the Council shall be responsible for the legal education of persons seeking to become members of the legal profession in Nigeria. By the virtue of this Act, the Council has an omnibus responsibility to approve admission of candidates to all faculties of law in the Nigerian as well as admission to Nigerian Law School. The Council regulates and supervises the approval and accreditation of law program in any institution intending to begin and accredit law program respectively.

Onolaja (n.d), is of the view that the focal point in legal education is to enable anyone intending to join the legal profession to acquire requisite knowledge of the law and ability to analyse various principles of law. Legal education is to groom students to be able to understand and analyse the law, to imbibe analytical research skill and to equip students with problem-solving skills. The emphasis

here is not on the acquisition of good grades or certificates which is just a means to an end and not an end in itself. A law student who goes to school only to memorize to pass his exams to have good grade will lack substance and what it takes to have a successful legal practice. Onolaja further emphasised that law students during their undergraduate training should be thoroughly taught how to find out what the law is when there is a need to. I made bold to say here that apart from finding out what the law is, law students should be taught how to find the law and where to find the law. Legal education must equip law students with the ability to research, analyse and criticise the law, with the view to ensuring that the law is what it ought to be. They must be able to communicate and present the law in solving practical problems.

Madubuike-Ekwe (2017)p.131, citing the work of Mammami (2008) stated that in order to understand the challenges of legal education in Nigeria, it is germane to know certain skill and competence expected of a lawyer which he listed as:

- Ability to analyse issues against the background of existing law, the direction the law is or should be developing and key policy considerations;
- Synthesize facts and situations given that most problems involve multidimensional facts and can weave those facts into a coherent narration;
- Advocate orally or in writing the views of individuals and groups within the context of the Law (Communication Skills);
- Can effectively negotiate.

According to him to produce lawyers with all these qualities our faculties of law must create an enabling environment of learning for law students.

The proliferation of faculties of law in Nigerian universities without the commensurate improvement in the standard of legal education but decline in quality of students produced by these faculties usually propelled the Council of Legal Education to invoke its power whether to approve law program, to accredit law program or discredit the existing ones whichever the case (onolaja n. d).

### **Importance of Law Library on Legal Education**

Law library is a special library established to help members of the judiciary and litigants, lawyers, state counsels, law officers, police officers, law lecturers, law students and other stakeholders in legal parlance (Gusau 2017). Law libraries are also used for legal drafting by legislators, officials of state government, local government and litigants (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia).

The notion and vision of academic Law Library were first conceived by Charles Eliot who was the

President of Harvard University from 1869 to 1999. He propounded that Law Schools (Faculties of Law) should not open at all without having in place a well-established law library as an integral part and the heart of a law school or Faculty of Law. Applauding this view, American Bar Association (ABA) also emphasized that Law Library is the very nucleus of any Law School and Faculty of Law without which Law school or Faculty of Law will be non-existence as it will not be approved by the Association.

American Bar Association, on the cardinal issue of approving the establishment of law schools and faculties of law, emphasised that it is trite that law library as the heart of any law school is a sine qua non in legal education. Law library is the repository of legal information for study and research for law students, law lecturers and other members of law school and faculties of law. In fact, the aphorism “the law library is the heart of the law school” is now a common say in any issue bordering on legal education.

In order for any university to meet up with both the National Universities Commission and Council of Legal Education parameters for approving and accrediting law program, the university must have in place a well-equipped library with current and up to date legal information resources. This is premised on the fact that for universities to produce graduates who would be able to compete favourably with their colleagues nationally and internationally based on the acquisition of above-mentioned knowledge and skills according to Onolaja and Madubuike-Ekwe (n.d), law students must be well acquainted with the use of law library by knowing the various legal information resources both in print and electronic formats and must know how to find and use the laws embedded in these resources thus, it is not unusual to say that the law library is the very lifeline upon which vibrancy of legal education and legal practice depend. This position was corroborated by Lord Denning that “a good lawyer is not only him who knows the law but he who knows where to find the law”.

The Council of Legal Education plays so much premium on quality and quantity of academic law library such that if any faculty of law in Nigeria seeking accreditation has the best building, best lecturers and the best facilities in place but does not have a well standard law library stocked with current foreign and local law textbooks, foreign and local law reports, foreign and local legislations, law journals local and foreign, law databases local and foreign, other auxiliary sources of legal information, adequate staffing and a qualified Law Librarian ( a Lawyer and a Librarian) housed in a good library building with all facilities installed to make study and research conducive and easy for law students and members of the faculty, that faculty of law would fail accreditation because it would

be a case of calling prospective husbands to come and marry a beautiful lady adorned with the most costly apparel and adornment without a heart.

Fabunmi and Popoola (1990) opined that to attain the aims and objectives of legal education which is to produce competent lawyers, the establishment of well-equipped and up-to-date law libraries faculties of law cannot be over-emphasised. The further stressed that availability of a standard library with current legal information resources will greatly assist the students who cannot afford to buy recommended textbooks and other resources to have access and use these resources. It will help the students to appreciate better the case-study method of teaching and will ultimately law faculties to inculcate the reading habit of consulting legal materials at the source. This will in no doubt help law faculties to produce future lawyers who are efficient and well-groomed to practice law.

According to Urhibo (2017), the law library which is established in legal institutions, faculties and schools are vital for the provision of legal information service to law students. The library is undoubtedly relevant for the legal body, for equipping students with the most appropriate information on legal proceedings and the profession as a whole. Law library is of utmost importance because is the bedrock of legal education the world over.

The primary duties of any law libraries are to curate, collect, control, and maintain legal information resources to support legal education in learning, teaching, and research as well as supporting the work of judges, lawyers and all stakeholders in the profession of law.

According to IFLA (2014), education plays an important and critical role in national development and sustainability through the availability and judicious utilisation of information resources in the library. They further stressed that increased access to information products and services is the foundation of universal literacy in all disciplines. Law libraries are saddled with the responsibility of proving legal information in various sources and make these various information resources accessible by their users and also guide the user in locating these resources (American Association of Law Libraries 2014). Law library is a place where legal information resources are acquired, processed, organized and stored for the use of law students aspiring to become lawyers, legislators and judicial officials (Ukpanal and Afolabi 2011).

To Tice (2011), law library is the intellectual heart of the law school and faculties of law all over the world as it provides students with up-to-date legal research materials for learning and study. Onalaja (n.d) stated that law library and law librarian are germane in the accreditation of faculties of law and therefore must be given required and special attention needed by universities. He further Stressed that since legal information is the primary tools of the legal profession, Law Librarian must do

everything necessary to ensure the availability of appropriate legal texts and assist law students to access and use these information resources.

### **Law Library Information resources**

Law library information resources in both print and electronic formats can be divided into four major categories; primary resources, secondary resources, reference resources and Serials.

Primary resources: these are legal information resources which contain the law; local laws, laws of states, law reports (national and international), and legislations (national and international). An ideal and a well standard academic law library should have all the laws of all the 36 States of the Federation of Nigeria, A Complete set of latest Law of the Federation of Nigeria and copies of the law in separate form such as Criminal Code, Criminal Act, Adjudication of Criminal Justice Act, Company Allied Matters Act, Land Use Act, Matrimonial Causes Act, Marriage Act, Sales of Goods Act, Hire Purchase Act, to mention but a few. There must be copies of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. A complete set of Halsbury Laws of England and other foreign legislation should be made available.

Judges made laws contained in law reports are very important tools to understand various principles of law which have severally been interpreted by various courts. A law library must have in its collection many of reports of various courts in Nigeria which include among others: Supreme Court of Nigeria Judgments, Supreme Court Reports, Nigerian Supreme Court Quarterly Law Reports Federation Weekly Law Reports, Nigeria Law Report, All Nigeria Law Reports, Nigerian Weekly Law Reports, Nigerian Monthly Law Reports, Law Reports of Nigeria, Judgments of the West African Court of Appeal (WACA), Western Region of Nigeria Law Reports, Eastern Region of Nigeria Law Reports, Northern Region of Nigeria Law Reports, Sharia Law reports of Nigeria, Customary law in Nigeria through the cases, Quarterly Law Reports of Nigeria, Nigerian Constitutional Law Reports, Nigerian Commercial Law Cases, Nigerian Revenue Law Reports, Failed Banks Tribunal of Nigeria Law Reports, Election Petition Reports, All England Law Reports etc.

Secondary sources: secondary resources also known as legal treatise are various writings about the law by authors and legal scholars who have severally analyzed, interpreted and criticized the law. Secondary sources of law are important as they expose students to divergent views about different principles of law which afford them the opportunity to have an in-depth understanding of the law. Law library's collection development policy, therefore, should be such that the library would have at least three copies of the most current edition of all renowned authors on each subject of law. Some of the secondary legal information resources are: ADR Alternative Dispute Resolution Cases And Materials

by Jide Olakanmi published in 2013 by LawLord Good Offices And Mini Trial: ADR Mechanics For Peace and Nation Building by Oluwayemisi Bamgbose published in 2018 by Oluwayemisi Bamgbose, International Commercial Arbitration Scotland And Uncitral Model Law by Davidson P. Fraser Published in 1999 by Sweet & Maxwell, A Practical Approach To Alternative Dispute Resolution by Susan Blake published in 2018 by Oxford University Press, Understanding Conflict Resolution by Peter Wallensteen published in 2012 by Sage Publication, The Nigerian Legal Method by Eseoghene Malemi O. published in 2012 by Princeton Publishing, Basic Concepts In Legal Research Methodology by Adewale Taiwo published in 2017 by St. Paul's Publishing House, Learning The Law In Nigeria By Kehinde Adegbite published in 2015 by Princeton & Associate, Jurisprudence by Funso Adaramola published in 2008 by LexisNexis to mention but few. Law library can contact publisher such as Princeton & Associate, Spectrum Books Ltd Sage Publications MIJ Professional Publishers, Nigerian Law Publications, Sweet & Maxwell, Oxford University Press, Routledge, Hart Publishing Bloomsbury, etc.

Reference Materials: these are information resources which are not for comprehensive reading but are for consultation. Reference materials assist students and other researchers in getting insight into certain technical terms or concepts. These include among others: Black Law Dictionary, Latin-Maxims, Law, Digests (Sasegbon Laws of the Federation, Digest of the Supreme Court, Corpus Juris Secundum, and United State Code Annotated New York Digest) Encyclopedias, Dictionaries (monolingual and multilingual), Autobiographies and Biographies, Laws of States etc.

Serials: The ALA Glossary of Library and Information Science defines the Serial as "a publication issued in successive parts, usually at regular intervals, and, as a rule, intended to be continued indefinitely. Serials include periodicals, annuals (reports, yearbooks, etc.) and memoirs, proceedings, and transactions of societies." Serials are very good materials for research because they contain recent and first-hand information. Law students do not usually make use of serial materials probably because they lack knowledge about the usefulness of serial publications. Thus, it is the duty of the law librarian to adequately educate students about the usefulness of serial publication to their course work and research. Serial publications come in the form of professional journals, magazines, newspapers, reports, bulletins, yearbooks and so on. (Tomomowo-Ayodele and Bakare 2018). Law libraries are expected to keep a continual subscription to these serial, however, because of lack of fund, it is hard to find any law library in Nigeria who have up-to-date issues of all the relevant serial publications. The common serial publication in law libraries include but not limited to: Nigerian Law Journal (Journal of the Nigerian Association of Law Teachers), Ahmadu Bello University Law Journal, The Journal of Private and Property Law (Journal of the Department of Private & Property Law,

University of Lagos), The Journal of the Nigerian Institute of advanced Legal Studies, University of Nigeria Law Journals, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Law Journal, Journal of the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan, Ife Juris Review, Nigerian Law and Practice Journal (Journal of the Nigerian Law School), Nigerian Journal of Contemporary Law (Journal of the Faculty of Law, University of Lagos), Ibadan University Law Review, The Calabar Law Journal (Journal of the Faculty of Law, University of Calabar, Nigeria), The Commercial and Industrial Law Review, Nigerian Bar Journal (Journal of the Nigerian Bar Association), Nigeria Journal of Education Law, the Vanguard News Paper, Guardian News Paper, Thisday News Paper etc.

Law Library Electronic Resources: it is trite that law libraries have also keyed into digitisation of law information resources in this era of information explosion and exploration through the use of the internet and world wide web (www) which create access to an avalanche of legal information within and outside the library. Students and faculty members can now do their works and conduct their research in the comfort of their homes, students can stay in their hostel or anywhere within and even outside the library and access all information they need through the use of the internet. Law libraries usually subscribe to legal databases individually or jointly to get access to law reports, statutes, rules of courts, government publications and gazettes, law digests, newspapers, dictionaries, etc. Some of the legal databases are: Law Pavilion, Compu law, Current Legal Information, Index to Legal Periodicals Practical Law, Legalpedia, HeinOnline, International Centre for Nigerian Law ([Http://www.nigeria-law.org](http://www.nigeria-law.org)), BOPCAS, Index to Legal Periodicals and Book, BAILII, Westlaw, JustisOne, Kluwer Arbitration, LexisNexis Oxford Scholarship Online etc. Some non-legal databases where law information resources can be found are: Jstor, EBSCO Host, ProQuest, Nexis UK, Scopus, Statista, The Times Digital Archive, First Search and, Web Science.

## **LAW LIBRARIAN**

A law librarian is a member of faculty of law, a law teacher who instructs and guides law students and law lecturers. According to Dada (2011), law librarianship is a mixture of the legal profession and librarianship. The primary duty of a Law Librarian is to find legal information from various legal information resources embedded in different formats; print and electronics, acquire these information resources, organise, store, preserve them, and makes them accessible to law students, faculty members and members of the legal profession.

According to Herrod (1990), Law Librarian administers and evaluates books and non-books materials in specific and limited fields of knowledge, and disseminates the information contained therein to meet the needs of the particular institution or its clientele. AALL (2016) Information professionals act

as connectors—digital cartographers who help law students, judges, and lawyers surface and synthesize both precedents and predictive indicators. According to the American Association of Law Libraries (“AALL”), “a law librarian is a legal information professional, who works in various legal settings, including law schools, private law firms, and government libraries.”

A law Librarian uses his skill to assist law students and other members of the faculty of law by inventing better mechanisms and better methodologies in learning and teaching of law which brings about a cordial relationship between law students and their teachers. Pengelley (2001). According to Lee (2015), law librarians are referred to as formal sources of legal information whilst other sources such as print materials and legal databases are referred to as traditional sources of legal information because law librarians are approachable and visibly institutionalized within a law library in a legal organization.

According to Cohen (1971), the principles of Law Librarian include but not limited to:

- i. Ability to implement the mission and vision of the parent institution;
- ii. Must be well familiarized with law library readers, their work and the legal information that will satisfy them;
- iii. Must be engaged in the teaching of legal bibliography, legal method, and legal research;
- iv. He must be able to create access techniques for law students and other members of faculty through professionally providing bibliographies to all legal information resources, well-prepared abstracts and indexes to legal materials;
- v. Ability to develop well rounded and balance collection and to employ the best classification scheme for law materials (MOYS classification Scheme) in organizing legal materials for ease of access and retrieval
- vi. Willingness and readiness for self- development by whatever means to keep abreast of the global trend in legal information delivery services.

According to Kane (2019) in order to live up to the expectation of the above principles, a Law Librarian performs the following duties:

- i. Answering users, queries to know the correct legal information resources that will satisfy users
- ii. Connect the users to the right sources both print and electronics and educate the users on how to use the resources

- iii. Provide instruction and guidance for use of library catalog, legal databases, and legal research
- iv. Conduct research on areas of law
- v. Conducting periodic reviews of new and existing resources to ensure efficiency in legal research.
- vi. Training students and other faculty members on how to use Legal databases.
- vii. Classification and cataloging of legal materials using MOYS Classification Scheme
- viii. Coordinating and supervising the work of clerks, library assistants and other staff of the library.
- ix. Ensures adequate security of all information resources, all facilities as well as the library building at all times.

For law Librarian to give his best in supporting legal education and to play his role judiciously as an information professional, he must be up and doing, foresight, proactive and innovative. The primary tool of the legal profession is the book. It is the duty of the librarians to provide the appropriate texts and to guide the prospective lawyers on how to access information. Law Librarianship is a crucial aspect of legal education.

### **QUALIFICATION OF A LAW LIBRARIAN**

According to the National Universities Commission (1989), a Law Librarian should hold a Bachelor's degree in addition to a Master in Library and Information Science (MLIS) to qualify as a Law Librarian. The combination of the knowledge of the law and of librarianship would enable a law Librarian to discharge his responsibilities expeditiously, judiciously and satisfactorily from a position of strength. According to Cohen (n.d), the ideal education for a Law Librarian is bachelor's degree in a full law school program leading to LL.B and master degree in Library Science. A first degree in law and another degree in librarianship are adequate as these become the unwritten legal license for being a law librarian in Nigeria. Having master's or doctoral degree in law is not necessary to be law librarian, but a first degree in law and master's in librarianship combined is adequately required (Olorunfemi 2016).

To corroborate the above Idowu (2006), citing the work of Harrison stated that the best-stocked library in the world without proper and adequate staff skilled to exploit its stock to the advantage of its users cannot be utilised maximally. The law faculty must have a law library with a qualified Librarian preferably a lawyer as the head, with the necessary complement of staff (Onolaja n.d). Education of law librarian is both formal and informal. Formal education is obtained through university education; bachelor degree in law (LL.B) and a degree in library science whilst the informal education is gotten through seminars, colloquial, symposium, workshop, etc. (Hazelto 1993).

The standard laid down by the Council of Legal education is that Law Librarians must be a Lawyer and possess master degree in Library and Information Science for effective management of law libraries in Nigeria. According to Raliat (2018), what distinguished a Law librarian from other Librarians is the fact that Law Librarians are professionals and specialists who are highly skilled in offering their services in information delivery in an exceptional and credible manner. IFLA (2014) asserted that best information services can only be available in law libraries to effectively and efficiently utilise information resources in law libraries by law students and other members of faculties of law only if the law library is professionally managed. Library users are encouraged when there is an evidence of efficiency in information service provided by the library. The patronage and frequency of use of any Law Library depend on managerial factors basically.

### **IMPORTANCE AND IMPERATIVE OF MANNING ACADEMIC LAW LIBRARIES BY LAWYERS**

In my few years of practicing a law librarian, I understand the reason why a law librarian is also a law lecturer howbeit in more silence and conservative manner. On several occasion students after leaving classrooms will come straight to my office to make enquires on certain principles of law; the origin of these principles, the locus classicus cases on these principles and how these principles have evolved over the years. With all seriousness they want the Law Librarian not only to suggest the books, law reports, and means through which they can get the best legal information materials to consult that will demystify what they were taught in their classes but also to have quality time to explain to them again what they were taught in class. There was a particular student who came to the library with his lecture note looking so frustrated; he said though he attended the class he did not understand the topic which was the different between criminal adjudication under the customary law and criminal adjudication under the native law. We had a discussion about the topic and at the end of the discussion he was happy that having had an insight and understood the concept he could then go to read more about it.

From the foregoing, therefore, the agitation or demands by some stakeholders in legal education in Nigeria that is only lawyers or people who have LL.B in law should be in charge of law libraries of all faculties of law is justifiable and the need for the proper implementation of this cannot be overemphasised as it has an impact on our legal education. To corroborate this, Leiter (n.d) said, "It is inconceivable that someone with no knowledge of legal bibliography or the law itself could curate a research law library for the useful benefit of law students and faculty".

One of the reasons why it is very germane and imperative for lawyers to man academic libraries is that law libraries are saddled with the responsibilities of preparing indexes and abstracts for law

treatises and other documents in law libraries in order for students to have easy access and retrieval of relevant materials from gamut of information resources available in the library and to have better understanding of the content of these resources at a glance in order to help them decide promptly the best materials that answer their information needs.

Another very important reason why it is imperative for lawyers to man our academic law libraries which I have discovered over my few years of practice as an academic Law Librarian is that law students and law lecturers find it easier to relate more with the people of the same profession. This might be due to the common say amongst lawyers and even non lawyers that lawyers are only “learned fellows” whilst other are merely educated. Surprisingly, even 100 level law students who just gained admission to study law also see themselves as part of the “learned fellows”.

There are times library staff working with me comes to my office requesting me to come to talk to law students who were always engaging them in hot arguments over some trivial issues just because of their ego. There was a particular student with his friends who came to my office asking if am a lawyer because of the way I relate with the students of which I answered in the affirmative, after that I noticed that any time they have presentation or any enquiry they walk straight to my office. There have also been times I would have to mediate between library staff and law lecturers who sometimes see the library staff being rude to them. Not because the staff were rude or snobby, but because they cannot just tolerate a non-lawyer exchange words with them. Based on these practical examples I made bold to say that if our students and other members of faculties of law are to be made to feel free and at home with using our law libraries and their collections, a lawyer who they can interact with freely to ask questions and exchange ideas without feeling intimidated or demeaned must be in charge of our academic law libraries. Relationship between a library and its patrons is one of the cardinal pillars to library use because it goes a long way to influence the information behaviour of Law Library users.

Akinwumi (2019) citing the work of Asuzu (2015), said it is not unusual for a layman or people who are not familiar with legal jargons or vocabulary to find it difficult or altogether impossible to decode, interpret and understand some legal concepts or legal terms. This is because lawyers who are the primary authors of most legislatures and legal treatise seem to have conspired to make their writing “arcane and esoteric”. Therefore, it would take persons (Law Librarians) who are members of the legal profession to use their skills and understanding of the law to interpret and break down these arcane and esoteric legal vocabularies and terms and bring them down to the understanding of a lay man, common man, law students and legal researchers in forms of abstracting and indexing whilst

still maintaining international standard of indexing and abstracting.

Law librarians are also expected to teach legal method, legal research at different levels, they are to conduct users training as well as one on one discussion with law students on how best to access, retrieve and utilize all information resources in the law library. In addition to this Law Librarians are expected to conduct in house training for other library staff working in the law libraries to train them how to relate to law students and other faculty members and how to assist them get their desired information as well as organize seminar for other member of the faculty to educate them on how to navigate through and use information resources available in law libraries. If information in the law libraries are to be judiciously, efficiently, adequately, sufficiently and maximally utilized, it very germane that law libraries must be managed by people who have the mixture of both law and librarianship, "nemo dat quod non habet".

Roles of law librarians as outlined by Leiter (2007) cited in Anyaegbu et al., (2013) includes: evaluating the quality of print and electronic information sources; teaching legal research methodology; participate in their institution assignments to meet the law library task and other requirements to be competent and diligent scholars. Dada (2011) further explains that lecturers and librarians perform their functions on equal footings, and that neither of them operates from the position of incapacity in terms of qualifications. Thus, every practicing law librarians are expected to be experienced librarians and qualified members of the law faculty that can be designated to head any law libraries in Nigeria.

Another area where it is imperative for lawyers to manage law libraries is the area of classification and cataloging of legal materials. Any information not well classified would be lost within the stock of the library and would remain inaccessible to its right users thus, the primary duty of a Law Librarian is to classify and catalog legal materials in all formats using the right classification scheme. Most academic libraries in Nigeria use Library of Congress Classification Scheme to classify their materials but, law libraries being special libraries use Moys Classification Scheme which was developed by Elizabeth Moys; the first University of Lagos Law Librarian for classification of legal materials. Unlike Library of Congress Classification Scheme where all subjects are classified under class K, Moys Classification Scheme provides unique notations for all areas of law. Although, Moys Classification Scheme has only one volume which makes it compactible and seem easy to use, there are some intricacies and technicalities involved in its usage that it requires deep understanding of the law in order to use it effectively and efficiently for the benefit of law libraries users.

Against the backdrop therefore, it imperative for all our law libraries in general and particularly

academic law libraries to be manned and managed by lawyers. If this is upheld and maintained, it would in no small measure help in improving our legal education as students and members of faculties of law would appreciate better the various information resources in the law libraries, improve the use of law libraries and this inferably would help law students to be equipped with enough knowledge with good footing to have successful legal career. It would also help legal researchers also to see the law libraries as central hubs for quality research.

In spite of the above stated facts, many of our law libraries in Nigeria are not still being managed by lawyers due to limited number of librarians who qualify as lawyers. Some universities also have lawyers who are not trained librarians i.e. they do not have masters in Library Science, some have Librarians who only have diploma in law and are not trained as Librarians. About 60% librarians in charge of faculties of law libraries are not Law Librarians. According to Olorunfemi (2016) qualified law librarians are very few in Nigeria. This is due to the fact that lawyers are not willing to leave legal profession for another profession considering the years they spent in school before they become lawyers; they cannot imagine themselves going to a library school to be trained as librarians. On the other hand, those who are librarians but willing to become Law Librarians cannot stand the time of going to register for law courses on full time as undergraduates to qualify as lawyers.

Another reason why we have few academic law librarians in Nigeria is because there is no national recognised body known as Association of Academic Law Librarians in Nigeria. What we have is Association of Law Librarians which brings together all librarians working with the judiciary, ministry of justice, private chambers, faculties of law, and Nigerian Institute of Advanced Legal Studies. Most of the members of this association are non-lawyers.

Also, qualified law librarians are few because of the discrepancy in the status accorded law lecturers and Law Librarians. Although, Law Librarians are accorded academic status, the salary scale used by universities for law lecturers is different from that used for law Librarians. Consequently, only those who have special passion for law librarianship are the few Law Librarians. Other Lawyers who are willing to join the academia would rather go for masters in law to become law lecturers. This ought not to be because the same criteria are used in the employment and promotion of both lecturers and librarians. Lecturers and librarians are employed to contribute to the attainment of the vision and mission of the university through learning, teaching, research and community service; lecturers and librarians are also promoted based on research and publication.

## CONCLUSION

Because academic law libraries and law librarians play inestimable and vital role in legal education in

Nigeria, the two statutory bodies controlling and regulating the approval and accreditation of law program in Nigerian universities place a very high premium on standard of academic law libraries. This is premised on the fact that for faculties of law to train students who would be able to compete favourably with their colleagues globally after graduation, they are not only to be well knowledgeable in law and all the principles of law, they must know where to find the law. They must be well groomed in the use of library as the library is the major tool in the practice of law. Law library collection must be current and up to date, the library information materials must be well organized for ease of access, retrieval and use. To help the law students and other members of faculty to have better understanding of the usage of the various information resources in the law libraries and to ensure maximum use of these resources, the activities of law libraries must be managed by Lawyers who coupled as Librarians and to encourage more lawyers to undergo training to become Law Librarians they must be accorded the same status as law lecturer in all ramifications.

In order to increase the number of academic Law Librarians in Nigerians, all qualified academic Law Librarians should form a body to be registered and recognized as Association of Academic Law Librarians which would afford them the opportunity to be recognized by the law of the land. This would also make it possible for them as a theme to sanitize and educate lawyers who are unwilling to commit themselves to be trained as Law Librarians about the prospects in law librarianship.

The two statutory bodies regulating the establishment of faculties of law in Nigeria, the Nigerian University Commission (NUC) and the Nigerian Council of Legal Education (NCLE) in order to encourage best information service delivery in all our faculties of law in Nigeria which in no small way would improve the standard of legal education in our dear country should uphold the policy of only approving and accrediting only faculties of law where the Law Librarians are qualified Law Librarian. They should also make a policy that both law Lecturers and academic Law Librarians are accorded the same position in both status and ranking. According to ACRL (2007), "librarians perform professional responsibilities, have an academic form of governance for the library faculty, enjoy equal representation in all college or university governance, receive compensation comparable to that of other faculty, covered by tenure policies, promoted in rank based on a peer review system, eligible for sabbatical and other leaves in addition to research funds, and do have the same academic freedom protections as other faculty. These are the features of faculty in general and as such are the justification for conferring the faculty status on librarians". Librarians actually contribute much more to achieving institutional goals because apart from being teachers, creators of knowledge and professionals in the field (librarianship), for the furtherance of teaching, learning and research, they develop collections provide bibliographic access to all library materials and interpret these materials

to students, researchers and other members of university community (Farkas 2005).

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