
An analysis of World Bank Depository Publications collection: case study of University of Calabar Library

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Keywords

World Bank, Information services, Collection management

Abstract

Analyses the characteristics of a special collection, styled World Bank Depository Publications, in the University of Calabar Library. The regional coverage of the collection is identified as including Asia, Latin America, Africa (sub-Saharan) in the main. Asia commands the highest coverage at 46.9 per cent; Latin America and Africa share 27.6 per cent and 23.3 per cent, respectively. Contends that publications on Africa, for example, are hardly written or produced by African experts. Further analyses of topics range from governance, civil society (13.8 per cent), developing economies (13.1 per cent) and banking, finance and development (12.8 per cent). Gender issues, particularly relating to the role of women in development, attained a respectable 7.4 per cent. Overall, the subject areas of the collection reflect emphasis in poverty (16.7 per cent), agriculture (15.6 per cent), corruption (13.3 per cent) and health (11.1 per cent). Concludes by appreciating the currency of the collection and the glossy well-illustrated production, but recommends that experts from within the regional areas covered should be commissioned as authors for the World Bank for more effective exposition of subjects at local level.

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Introduction

Special collections in university libraries is a global phenomenon. An overview of such collections usually reveals subject areas such as politics, culture and history of individuals and institutions within the environment where data is generated. A major characteristic of special collections is that they are either donations or outright solicited gifts. Since the demise of colonialism and all its dire straits and effects on the socio-economic psyche of societies in developing countries that formed the bulk of colonies, the need for information for development purposes has been greatly pronounced.

Economic growth has more often than not been stunted due to lack of appropriate and adequate information in statistical and investment planning terms. Problems that are essentially political in nature have subsumed the problem of economic development due to information drought. For instance, since their independence, the economy of many developing countries has been engulfed in contradictions. Some of the basic contradictions have been the natural manifestations of the status of the economy as one which is structured to serve the neocolonial interests of the Western capitalist states. Equally, the economy has not advanced beyond producing to meet the industrial raw material and energy requirements of the USA, Europe, Japan and other parallel states of neocolonialism.

An inevitable impact of colonial administration was the need to organize and disseminate information in the world war effort, which involved Nigerian citizens.

As reported in the literature, the World Bank has, with some conditions, intervened to reduce information poverty in developing countries (Lawal, 1995). This has assisted the poorer nations, such as Nigeria, to improve information provision in the education sector through the acquisition of books, journals, laboratory equipment and staff development. Through granting of loans, the World Bank has continued to assist in its policy to alleviate book scarcity in Africa and the poor state of knowledge facilities.

With its massive resources, as evidenced in its active publications programmes, the World Bank



has focused on developmental issues confronting the regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America. One of the objectives of information dissemination through establishment of depository libraries is to promote the reporting of activities of the World Bank through the commissioning of a body of experts to write on topical issues usually based on research.

The University of Calabar Library gained World Bank Depository (WBD) status in 1998, for the storage and use of its publications. The library receives one or multiple copies, free of charge, of books, reports and monographs published by the World Bank organization. A special unit was set up in the Africana Library, so as to encourage consultation of the publications by staff and students of the institution. The unit is referred to as "World Bank Publications Library".

Features of the collection

WBD publications focus essentially on social sciences and related studies in agriculture, rural development, health/nutrition and population. They are presented in glossy hardcovers and paperbacks with colourful illustrations. The publications have Cataloging-in-Publication (CIP) data and ISBN. There are serialized published catalogues (with index), The World Bank Publications Update, documenting each publication in the collection. However, there is an in-house subject classification, designed by the Africana Unit, to provide easy access to the collection.

Methodology

Ledger entries for users of WBD publications was analysed for the months of October 2000 to June 2001. The collection was grouped into four broad regional areas of Asia (China, Korea), Latin America, Africa (sub-Saharan) and others (consisting of occasional publications such as annual reports, journals, newsletters, etc.) (see Tables I, II and III). A selection of materials was made, based on concepts of development and its data analysed. Users of information from the selected materials were interviewed on the level of

Table I Analysis of books received

S/N	Broad regional groupings	No. of titles	Percentage
1	Asia (China, Korea)	850	46.9
2	Latin America	500	27.6
3	Africa (Sub-Sahara)	422	23.3
4	Others (annual reports, Journals)	40	2.2
	Total (titles received)	1,812	100

Table II Number of volumes received

S/N	Title/topics	Quantity	Percentage
1	Agriculture and rural development	300	10.3
2	Banking, finance and investment	370	12.8
3	Developing economics	380	13.1
4	Education and training	75	2.6
5	Energy, mining and industry	112	3.9
6	Environment and pollution prevention	270	9.3
7	Gender issues	215	7.4
8	Governance, civil society and participation	400	13.8
9	Health, nutrition and population	180	6.2
10	Infrastructure, transportation and urban dev.	170	5.9
11	Social, cultural and poverty issues	260	8.9
12	Water and sanitation	168	5.8
	Total	2,900	100

Note: Categorisation of the materials. A total of 2,900 volumes of WBD books were received and assessed between October 2000 and June 2001. The breakdown of the materials are as follows, as then in Table I

Table III

S/N	Subject areas identification	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender issues	95	10.6
2	Health	100	11.1
3	Population studies	45	0.5
5	Agriculture	140	15.6
6	Privatisation/liberalisation	60	6.7
7	Corruption	120	13.3
8	Poverty	150	16.7
9	Non-governmental organisations	35	3.9
10	Transportation/environmental studies	23	2.6
11	Finance/investment	57	6.3
12	Rural development	75	8.3
	Total	900	100

satisfaction on their enquiries. Users were also surveyed on currency of materials, other relevance and statistical data available in the documents.

Data analysis

The regional coverage of WBD books was analysed and showed that 46.9 per cent of the

collection focused on Asian studies; 27.6 per cent were materials based on Latin American studies; an average 23.3 per cent of the collection was on sub-Saharan Africa, most patently on poverty and its alleviation; the others constituted 2.2 per cent (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). There are implicit implications in these regional groups. For instance, of significance is the subject, *poverty*, (see Figure 3) at 16.7 per cent of 12 subject areas identified. This was closely followed by studies on agriculture and corruption at 15.6 per cent and 13.3 per cent, respectively. Another subject area worthy of note is health, with 11.1 per cent, and gender issues with 10.6 per cent especially highlighting the role of women in development

Figure 1 Analysis of regional coverage in World Bank Books deposited (October, 2000-June, 2001)

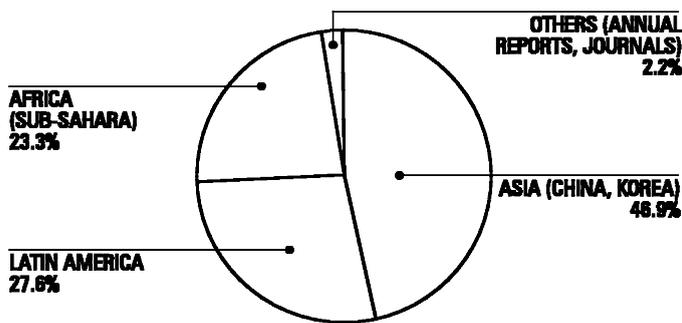


Figure 2 Number of volumes received by subject categorisation

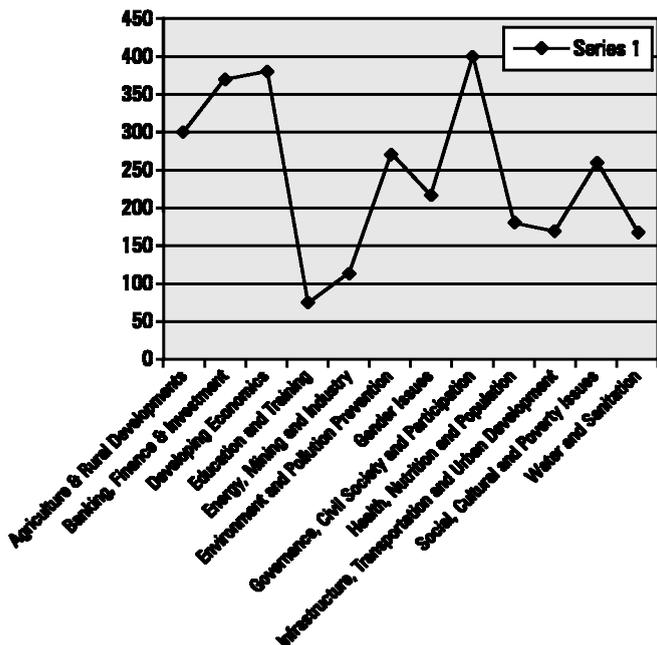
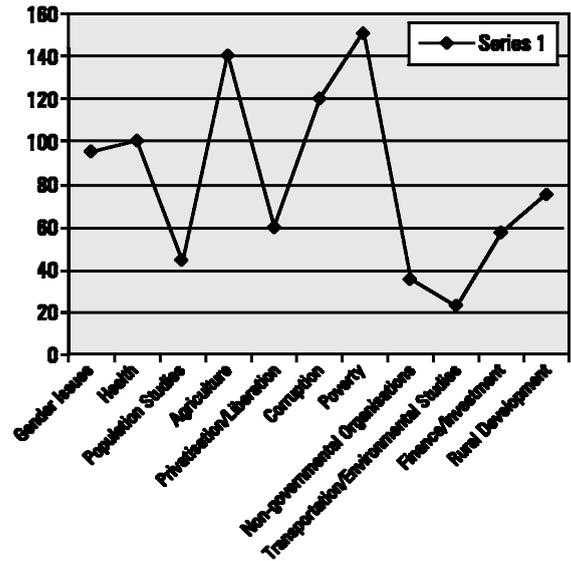


Figure 3 Graphical presentation



and population studies. Surprisingly, studies on the environment took a back seat with only 2.6 per cent of the collection, while rural development had a respectable 8.3 per cent. It can be observed that most of the World Bank experts authoring the works are foreign to the areas they are conducting the study on. This can be disadvantageous to the findings of the research study, especially where there is racial bias. Of users interviewed, 82 per cent expressed that they were very satisfied with the collection; 10 per cent of users interviewed were just satisfied because, according to them, the data was not too relevant to their local circumstance. However, 8 per cent of the users were scientists who felt that the WBD publications were too much concentrated on social sciences.

Discussion/summary

The WBD publications have really proved to be useful additions to the University of Calabar Library collection. The currency of the publications, the relevance of topics, the well-analysed statistical data and monographs/supplementary reports are valuable aspects of the publications. Some of the publications address environmental challenges, problems associated with poverty and the struggle for its alleviation perhaps more fundamentally, an

internationalist approach, in a global context, has been the main focus of the World Bank as publishers in disseminating information based on its active publications programme.

According to James D. Wolfensohn (2000, p. 5) the President of the World Bank Group:

We have deepened our understanding of what poverty is and of how to generate equitable development . . . But we will make progress in fighting poverty only if we all work together – Developing and developed countries, international institutions, civil society in all its forms, and the private sector . . . Ours must be a partnership to build a new internationalism to match a globalized economy.

A considerable advantage of globalization is free information, affordable and accessible in format. Accessibility to knowledge and information constitutes practical avenues to accelerate development. It is, therefore, significant to note that 87 per cent of 30 users of WBD materials interviewed found the publications of high relevance to their research, while 13 per cent felt they were not localized

enough in interpretation and presentation. As stated earlier, 82 per cent were very satisfied in their use of the materials and other enquiries arising from there.

In conclusion, regardless of the World Bank's economic objectives and policies, particularly for the developing countries, which seem contentious in some quarters, a policy of free access to information is laudable and one can only hope that an uninterrupted supply of such valuable educational materials would continue to be deposited in libraries as repositories of knowledge.

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