ACCESS TO INFORMATION: A FEW SUGGESTIONS BY SOME USERS FROM THE CENTRE DE RECHERCHES OCÉANOGRAPHIQUES DE DAKAR THIAROYE

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ABSTRACT: This paper studies the different problems encountered in the access to information at the Centre de Recherches Oceanographiques de Dakar-Thiaroye (Dakar-Thiaroye Oceanographic Research Center). It discusses the end results of an enquiry made with the different users of the library.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is split into two parts. The first part follows the above abstract, concerned with the enquiry made with the different users of the Library. The second part deals with some observations and recommendations.

THE SURVEY

25 users selected to fill in the questionnaire represent a mixture of researchers and users from outside the institution. There were 13 researchers, 4 students, 5 economic operators, 2 teachers from Cheikh Anta DIOP University in Dakar and 1 teacher from Blaise Diagne high school in Dakar (Senegal).

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Time used in the researching of documents.

8 of the researchers spend 10% of their time in researching the appropriate document for their work, while students, teachers and economic operators spend 30 to 50% of their time in researching documents.
What are your information sources?

The different information sources of our Library users are:

- Scientific reviews
- Colleagues
- ASFA and Current Contents on CD-ROM

From these responses we can deduce that the different media (TV, radio, etc..) are not taken into account.

Problems encountered in the access to information

The main problems users are facing in their access to information are as follows:

- Currency devaluation, coupled with ever increasing book and periodical prices makes it difficult to obtain some documents.
- Postal rates are high
- Most of the scientific literature is written in English and it is very expensive to get a translation.
- Our library budget is declining and users cannot gain access to periodicals they used to receive in the past.
- A large number of documents in mathematics are written in English and we do not have enough books in data processing.
- Except for ASFA, we have no access to any other international database in the field of Fisheries and Oceanography.
- Access to information from our own region and country is very difficult. Researchers do not know very well what is being done by their own colleagues in the field of Fisheries and Oceanography.
- There is a lack of motivation in African researchers in the dissemination of their research results. They do not send copies of their publications to libraries.
- Students who do not have enough money cannot obtain photocopies of the documents they need.
- The number of public libraries is insufficient. Apart from the University Libraries and the libraries of the French and American Cultural Centres, it is rare to find a good and well structured public library.
- Our Educational system does not train pupils how to do research. There is not enough practice in research.
• The public is not well informed of the different existing research structures in the country.

What do you suggest for better access to information?

The suggestions for better access to information have been various due to the diversity of the users (students, economic operators, researchers and teachers) involved in the enquiry.

Notable, however, are the following:

• Connection to and participation in international databases
• An increase in the library budget.
• An increase in human resources
• Greater care taken of the most important documents in the library in order to avoid their disappearance.

• An uninterrupted subscription to ASFA and Current Contents
• A reduction by the government of postal rates.
• There must be closer contacts between the librarian and the researchers.
• The librarian must enhance the scientific character of the centre and keep on telling users about the different services they can find at the Centre de Recherches Oceanographiques de Dakar-Thiaroye
• An English teaching programme must be undertaken for all the researchers.
• Access to the Internet must be secured for all the researchers.
• There must be a diversity of scientific documents. There are so many interesting things about Fisheries and Oceanography (e.g. data processing, economics etc...) that could be of interest to users
• A small library for the children of the institution must be set up.
• Library exchange must be improved mainly between African libraries in order to obtain "grey literature" and scientific publications.
• The public must be informed of the different research programmes of existing research institutions. They also must be kept informed about the research results through adequate means.
• At school there must be a course on documentation, teaching how to do research, use a document, consult a directory and gain access to the information you need.
• There must be cooperation between teachers and researchers. For some specialised courses, teachers can seek the contribution of researchers.
• Researchers must go to the public and explain their research results.
- The media (television and radio) must contribute to the dissemination of research results.
- Also, it will be good for researchers to go to different schools and explain to pupils what they are doing and what their main results are.

**OBSERVATIONS**

I believe that one of the biggest problems in access to information in Senegal, and Africa in general, is a problem of culture. Africa is an oral civilization and people are not used to reading and going to libraries. This may be one of the reasons why our governments do not promote the creation of public libraries. They do not grant many funds for the libraries. By solving these problems we will solve 50% of our problems of access of information.

**CONCLUSION**

African countries must join their forces and create a common bibliographic database. They must also have the support of their governments for a better integration. Well-structured networks could give users access to primary documents. In addition, as information is the basis of development in developing countries, research in schools must be promoted. By familiarising children with research, we will create future good researchers who will give us the possibility to for development.