

# **Information seeking behaviour of law students in a developing country: A literature review**

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## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine the information seeking behaviour of undergraduate law students in a developing country. In this paper, we review literature on the information seeking behaviour and ICT utilisation skills of law students, using Nigerian universities' undergraduate law students as a case study. The review focuses on legal information, library information and its relevance to lawyers and law students, Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the legal profession, information services for legal professionals, information needs of law students, the information seeking strategy of law students, ICT utilisation skills of law students, law students' utilisation of digital libraries, challenges and problems of digital libraries, and legal information seeking behaviour and ICT skills of law students in Nigeria.

The analysis indicates that law students (or lawyers) do not fully utilise library information resources while seeking information, due to a lack of exposure to ICT equipment and/ or the traditional teaching method used in law classes, which does not encourage them to harness legal information from the university law libraries. Some of the literature reveals a poor electricity power supply; lack of professional and skilled staff; lack of a maintenance culture and lack of commitment by staff as some of the problems that cause the poor utilisation of ICTs. It also reveals the lack of library resources and staff training deficiencies as some of the challenges faced and as the other contributory factors as to why lawyers or law students lack interest in making use of the law libraries to seek information. Furthermore, law students have a misconception of the roles and values of law libraries and the information professionals in their studies, which results in the adoption of other information seeking strategies that exclude the use of libraries and the library staff in the process of seeking information.

**Keywords:** Information seeking behaviour, law students, Nigeria, Nigerian public universities, developing countries.

## **Introduction**

Various studies (e.g. Taylor and Procter, 2005; Ikoja- Odongo and Ocholla 2004, Marchionini, 1995, Wilson, 2000) have been done to delve into the information seeking behaviour of different users of library and ICT resources. These studies have also given a diverse definition of users' information seeking behaviours. Taylor and Procter (2005:1) define information seeking as the ability to efficiently scan literature using manual or computerized methods, in order to identify a set of useful articles and books. According to Ikoja-Odongo & Ocholla (2004), seeking information is the process where an individual goes about searching for information, which is a process that requires the information seeker to apply personal knowledge, skill or personal information infrastructure to solve a problem. Marchionini (1995) further develops this by stating that information seeking is a fundamental human activity that is closely related to learning and problem solving. Scholars have made several suggestions as to what constitutes as information seeking attitudes of law library users in relation to ICT usage. For example, Julien (1995:1) claims that information seeking is concerned with determining users' (lawyers' or law students') information needs, search behaviour and the eventual use of the information searched. Aina, in Nkomo, Ocholla and Jacobs (2011:2), suggests that information seeking behaviour depends on user education, access to a library, and the length of time devoted to seeking information by the user. Wilson (2000) sees it as the purposive seeking for information because of the need to satisfy certain or specific some goals. In the process, the individual may interact with manual information systems, such as newspapers, the library, or computer-based systems like the World Wide Web, to retrieve the required information. Therefore, information seeking is the process or activity of attempting to obtain information in both human and technological contexts.

The students aspiring to enter into the law profession require primary information for academic and research purposes in the university. The need to utilise available library and ICT sources in the law libraries is very crucial because legal information is needed to pass all examinations, write assignments given at every stage of the academic curriculum, and research learning. Tuhnmwire and Okello-Obura (2010) assert that law sections in 'public' university libraries subscribe to various law databases for legal research. Some of the databases include: Lexis-Nexis, Westlaw, Legalpedia, Compulaw and Ebscohost, law journals, law reports, and others text resources. The users of law libraries (i.e. law lecturers, students and legal practitioners) agree that the availability of databases in libraries has made their research work easier and more interesting. Therefore, accessing materials for lecture preparation and students' assignments are effortlessly carried out, as all that is needed is to key in the right words into the computer system to download necessary information from the internet or a law database (Doherty, 1998).

From our observations, law students in the Faculty of Law at the Adekunle Ajasin University, Nigeria, do not seem to fully utilise ICT resources when seeking information in the library. The students seem to lack the skills required for using ICTs in searching for information in their field of study. They also do not seem to have been exposed to the core information retrieval tools required for the law profession and are not skilled enough to use gadgets, such as computers, the internet and information databases, available in the law library. We observed that law students seem to be apathetic towards the library, believing that they have all the books

and information sources, required to graduate, in their personal homes. They mainly use the library as either a reading place or as a place where they can write assignments.

Additionally, very few studies seem to have been undertaken to determine how law students in Nigerian universities seek and utilise information. To date, the Ossai (2011) study is the only one, known to us, that is closely related to this study. However, the Ossai study is limited in scope and context, as it investigates only one of the thirty Nigerian universities offering law. The study mainly focuses on how law students from the University of Benin, Benin City in Nigeria, utilise information resources. Other than the Ossai study, there is currently no detailed work, carried out at the Doctoral level in Nigeria, that actually investigates how law students, in all Nigerian universities, seek, retrieve and utilise information sources and, specifically, ICTs. This has created an anomaly; therefore, this study seeks to bridge the gap by examining the information seeking behaviour of law students in Nigerian universities with specific reference to their ICT skills utilisation.

The purpose of this paper is to review and appraise extant literature on information seeking behaviour of law students and their relevance to Nigeria. This is basically a desk research study informed by the qualitative content analysis of related studies.

## **2. University and law education in Nigeria.**

Nigerian universities refer to the degree awarding institutions in Nigeria where law and other courses are offered. There are one hundred and seventeen (117) universities approved by the National Universities Commission in Nigeria. The universities are located within the six geopolitical zones, thirty-six states and the federal capital territory in Nigeria. The federal government and the state governments were previously the only bodies licensed to operate universities in Nigeria. Later, licenses were granted to individuals, corporate bodies and religious bodies to establish private universities in Nigeria. The [National Universities Commission](#) (NUC) is the major accreditation body that enforces uniform standards and sets the admissions capacity of every university in Nigeria. These universities are directly managed by the federal government through the National Universities Commission (NUC) that oversee and supervise them for quality control. The NUC is the body that is responsible for the accreditation of the universities and all programs of studies in the universities. Any university not approved by the NUC is not recognized and cannot graduate students in Nigeria.

There are two categories of universities in Nigeria, i.e. public universities and private universities. The public universities are owned by federal or state governments, while private universities are established either by religious bodies, corporate organisations or individual philanthropists. The universities are funded and managed by their different proprietors. Federal universities own 36 universities and the state also has 36. This makes a total of 72 universities owned and funded by the two tiers, while private bodies established and fund 45 universities in Nigeria (UME/JAMB Brochure, 2010/2011; NUC, 2011). The University of Nigeria, Nsukka, was the first university to introduce a law program in 1962, while the most recent law education programme was established in 2008 by the Rivers State University of Science and Technology (National Universities Commission, 2011). The legally approved universities in Nigeria offer

various courses, both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, which include: medicine, agricultural science, science & technology, social sciences, sciences, library, archival and information studies, education, law etc. The postgraduate courses take between one and two academic calendar years, while the number of years spent for an undergraduate program of study in a Nigerian university range between four and six calendar years, depending on the course of study. For instance, the duration of a program for undergraduate studies in medicine is six (6) years; sciences is five (5) years; law five (5) years; engineering and technology five (5) years; social and management sciences four (4) years; arts and other related courses four (4) years; and education four (4) years. This study mainly focused on the public universities in Nigeria.

### **3.0. Information seeking behaviour of law students**

This part consists of nine sections, which are discussed below.

#### **3.1. The importance of legal information**

To understand the concept “legal information” it is important to first understand what is meant by the term “information”. Loose, in Ikoja-Odongo and Mostert, (2006:146), indicates that the term information has been defined, understood and differently interpreted across various disciplines, vocations and professions. Olorunfemi (2009) supports the view that people differently interpret the concept of “information”. Olorunfemi (2004) also posits that information is knowledge obtained from investigation, study or instruction. The decision-makers such as politicians, governments, managers, judges and so on perceive information as the process by which event of the external world are conceived and thus provides opportunity to form judgments and make decisions on economic, education, moral and legal issues. According to Folorunsho and Ibrahim (2005:54), information is a fact, an opinion or an idea from any source, which can give support to making adequate decisions. Information has also been defined as “a property of matter, any message, document, or information resource; any publicly available symbolic material; or any data” (Smith and Mostert, 2004:114). Opeke (1993) posits that information is a vital element in decision-making, while Buckland (1991) is of the opinion that information is an input that reduces the level of uncertainty in decision-making. Kaniki, in Mostert (2004:114), corroborates that information is "ideas, facts, and imaginative works of the mind, data of value, and potentially useful for decision making and question answering, which leads to a ‘state of knowing’". Therefore, information is an important tool used in the realization of any goal set by an individual, group, or organization.

Igbeka and Atinmo (2002: 9) agree that information is a ‘valuable resource required in any society’ and a vital organ of human existence, without which the whole of humanity would have been in darkness. It is a vital resource that stimulates the socio-economic development of the society. Information is important to people in diverse vocations. For example- judges, lawyers and law students, as they require information in their day to day activities. For instance, they need information on how to determine the case (judges), argue or represent a client before the law court (lawyers), and how to pass the law examination (law students). In modern legal society, information is a vital instrument required for the day-to-day activities of people in the legal profession, who need legal information to make vital and rational decisions that may

directly involve human life. If retrieved legal information is accurate, then there is a high probability of making good decisions. If information is inaccurate, the ability to make correct decisions is diminished. Better information usually leads to better decisions (Walonick, 2004).

Therefore, legal information is an important tool required in realizing lawyers' goals of defending clients in court and it assists judges in administration to decide cases in court of all jurisdictions. Legal information is a valuable resource needed in the society of legal practitioners, including the law students that are learning how to become lawyers. Lawyers play a vital role in society, especially in acting as a voice for others in every capacity of law or in legal issues that occur on a regular basis, which one cannot handle, nor have the time to handle. Having a lawyer to take care of one's legal affairs is very much required and it is one sure way to become "free from unnecessary headaches". Oke-Samuel (2008) corroborates that lawyers' roles include giving legal advice and that they must know where to find laws. In addition, a number of positions in the government are being held by lawyers. Thus, they contribute in providing and regulating peace within the country (Hood, 2006; Exforsys, 2010; Buzzle, 2010; and Khan and Bhatti 2011).

Kemp, cited by Reddy (2010), posits that information is a critical resource, ranking just after air, water, food, and shelter. The concept of information in legal study is paramount to people in legal disciplines, such as judges, lawyers and law students. They need legal information for making decisions in all areas of law. Especially law students, they particularly require information for various reasons in their study areas, in which information may be acquired through a systematic study of the legal research process. Law students generally need information on how to pass examinations, write assignments, and search for new information based on the existing literature available in digital and/ or traditional law libraries.

According to Reddy (2010), information can be acquired, processed, and disseminated through the university law libraries, where library resources, users and information managers interact together for the transmission of 'informational knowledge'. The transmission of 'informational knowledge', according to Nwosu, in Reddy (2010), is the most important resource in the pursuit of the general goals and objectives of institutions of higher learning. Therefore, Reddy (2010) agrees that it is imperative for library managers to understand how library resources are searched and utilised by library users.

### **3.2. Library information and its relevance to law students**

The Nigerian society requires information for effective decision making in all sectors, such as: education, economic, governance, healthcare, industries, organisations, etc. Such information is essentially packaged in different formats. Today, one of the parameters for categorizing a country as developed or undeveloped is the extent to which it develops its information systems to achieve diverse purposes. According to Nwalo (2000), communities find information relevant to them for different purposes. For example, the information requirements of rural communities include how to increase agricultural yield, which entails the application of fertilizer, high quality seed varieties, pest and disease control, etc. Riley (1999) believes that information relevance is a condition in which information contributes to the achievement of a genuine or legitimate

purpose. Opeke (2000) tends to support this as she asserts that a well organised system of information is a prerequisite for effective decision making, organisational function and the higher education goal achievement.

Law students' information requirements are imperative in view of the fact that they need to make effective use of the library and information resources and services, which is relevant to their studies, in order to achieve their educational goals. Igbeka (1995) corroborates that information centres or libraries are the best agent to provide information sources and services. Law students require library information sources and services to effectively cope with the workload of their academic work. Law students generally seek information on how to pass examinations, conduct legal research- in order to write assignments- and write theses to enable them to graduate from university (Oke-Samuel, 2008). They are taught substantive law courses like: Contract Law, Constitutional Law, Criminal Law, Equity and Trust, Evidence, Land Law, Jurisprudence and Torts, and so on. To be able to achieve success in these courses, they need to use library sources and services, especially the digital law libraries (Oke-Samuel, 2011 Interview). According to Watt (2004), law students need to be well groomed in research skills because as lawyers, whose role includes giving legal advice, law students must know where to find laws. The importance of this role to the lawyer is emphasised by King George III, cited in Watt (2004), when he posits that 'a lawyer is not the one that knows the law, but the one who knows where to find law'.

### **3.3. Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the legal profession**

The university law libraries are shifting from the traditional form of providing manual services to the electronic form, through ICT channels, for effective and efficient information dissemination service delivery to clients. The term ICT (Information Communication Technology) has been defined in a variety of ways by scholars across various disciplines. Mansell and Silverstone, in Bosire (2011:55), indicate that ICTs are electronic networks, which consist of hardware and software that are linked by a vast array of technical protocols. ICTs are embedded in networks and services that affect the local and global accumulation of the general flow of knowledge (Bosire 2011). Therefore, ICTs can be said to be the electronic tools used for gathering and storing information for easy access by users.

ICT has had a great impact on research and development in many academic disciplines through the provision of a wide variety of resources and many powerful tools with which to search for resources. ICT has transformed text -based information into a digital format. Its availability online has improved the information seeking environment of users, thereby allowing them to overcome many information barriers, such as feasibility, accessibility, efficiency in time, space, and so on (Oh and Albright, 2004). These scholars (Oh and Albright, 2004) claim that an increasing number of individuals use online tools as the main channel of sourcing information, while organisations use online tools as their main channel for information resources. The need for ICT skills by law students in retrieving electronic information cannot be over-emphasised because it is necessary for the successful learning at schools and their performances at work in future responsibilities as legal advisers. However, studies have shown that the law students

generally do not use ICT resources (Tunkel, 1997; Mock, 2001; Cuffe, 2002; Milles, 2005; Niedwiecki, 2006; Barkan, 2007).

The changing nature of ICT application in the law library setting has brought about different ICT equipment, such as electronic journals, electronic databases, electronic books, computers, digital libraries, internet, wireless networks, and so on.

The channels for ICT service delivery in most law libraries in Nigerian universities include: electronic databases, internet services, computer systems, and so on. The application of ICTs in Nigerian university libraries has great impact on the service delivery sector in the areas of storage, retrieval and dissemination of library information resources (materials), which tends to represent a symbolic increase in the productivity of knowledge and modern education. Bosire (2011:9) agrees that ICTs are instrumental in increasing productivity, efficiency, competitiveness and growth in every sphere of human life. This accounts for Akpoghome and Idiegbeyan-Ose's (2010) claim that many academic libraries are now actively involved in building institutional repositories of their library materials, such as books, papers, thesis and other works, which are digitized and made available to students and the general public without much restriction. According to Mugwisi and Ocholla, cited in Nkomo, Ocholla and Jacobs (2011), with regard to students and staff in institutions of higher learning, the use of the internet provides a cheap and easy way of communication that is widely accessible from any location. The internet also provides various modern information services for scholars, researchers, judges, legal practitioners and students in the legal discipline.

#### **3.4. Information needs of university law students**

According to Wilson (1997), the problem of studying information seeking behaviour starts with the concept of 'information need', which has proved difficult due to the subjective nature of needs as it is experienced or occurred only in the mind of the person in need. This experience can only be discovered by deduction from behaviour or through the reports of the person in need because need cannot be directly observed. Bumkrant, in Wilson (1997), defines the subjective character of need as "a cognitive representation of a future goal that is desired". However, in spite of the subjective nature of need, various types of needs have been defined through deduction and report. For example, Morgan and King, in Wilson (1997), propose that needs emerge from three kinds of motives: physiological motives (hunger and thirst), unlearned motives (including curiosity and sensory stimulation) and social motives (the desire for affiliation, approval or status, or aggression) (Wilson, 1997:552-553). The concept of motive may be applied to the law students' information needs and seeking attitudes since it can be assumed that, for cognitive, affective, or physiological reasons, law students experience needs for information. It is these needs that actually activate their motive to engage in seeking information on how to enter a university to study law, prepare for examinations, write assignments, pass out of the universities as law graduates and eventually become qualified lawyers.

Otike (2000) notes that lawyers need information to fulfil the legal obligation of their clients in case preparation, and seek assistance from the Court library, District Bar library, or collections in

other law firms. In the context of the law students, the specific information needs of the law students arise in the course of their studies in law education. Odusanya and Amusa (2003) identify four aspects of education related information needs of 'law' students as follows:

- Current information on research findings on law emanating from conferences, seminars, and workshops
- Information related to pursuance of innovative ideas or exploratory knowledge to satisfy students' curiosity.
- Information on current affairs and general knowledge
- Information required for (legal) administration (Odusanya and Amusa, 2003).

In addition to the above-enumerated study, about the learning and research related information needs of law students in Nigerian universities, the researchers argue that the students also need information for daily existence on the campus. This includes information on business and economic matters, consumer goods, health, good living, politics, religion, food, shelter, student unionism on campus, as well as information on scholarship, bursary and job opportunities. Although scholars have identified the various types of information needs of different individuals and groups, this researcher is of the view that law students require primary information for academic and research needs in school, while the other types of information that they may need is secondary to the legal information requirements in their academic curriculum.

### **3. 5. Information seeking strategy of law students**

Scholars have conducted various studies to investigate the information-seeking strategy of library users based on their subject of interest, occupation, information environment, and geographical location (Majid and Kassim, 2000). Information seeking behaviour of law students and legal professionals has also been a popular area of research, where earlier studies have reported that law students and legal professionals heavily used books and journals. Kuhlthau and Tama (2001), in their study, submit that lawyers prefer printed text. Majid and Kassim (2000) corroborate this in their study of the "Information-seeking behaviour of International Islamic University Malaysia law faculty members". The study also reveals that the respondents prefer printed format over electronic format and that they first consult their personal collection before resorting to other information- providing sources and agencies. Wilkinson as cited in Majid and Kassim (2000), concludes that lawyers overwhelmingly prefer informal sources when seeking information.

Many factors may determine the information seeking approach of an individual, a group of individuals, or a group of law students. Such factors include: little encouragement from the law teachers, a well-equipped university law library with modern information communication technology resources (e-library, e-books, law databases, computer system, internet, and so on) and current informational legal resources (textbooks, law reports, journals, and so on), which would attract law students to use the law library. Hence, Adetunmisi (2005) claims that the information seeking strategies of people vary according to the content, the medium, the language of communication, time and the nature of information being sought. She emphasised that the nature of the institution where the users are situated and the status of educational training for



which information sought is used can considerably influence the information seeking attitude of users (Adetunmisi, 2005). Robinson et al (1995), who studied information seeking and use, found that differences in the use of information sources and the type of information sources used exist among professionals. This finding centres on the fact that disparity in information resources and services can influence the information seeking attitude of law students to the effect that they behave differently from students in other faculties. A more concrete reason for this phenomenon, according to this researcher, may be attributed to the significant change brought about by ICTs in the information environment (library), information needs, and the information seeking behaviour of law students.

Tackie and Adams (2007:69-78) reiterate that literature on information seeking behaviour acknowledges that mechanisms related to information seeking is different from everyday information seeking. Furthermore, the different characteristics of various work environments make one type of information seeking different from the other. Tackie and Adams, therefore, suggest that it would be more beneficial to study one group of information seekers at a time and use the result to develop user oriented information systems in order to serve the group better. This submission tends to confirm the focus of this research.

Various research efforts have ascribed deficiencies in information seeking behaviour of law library users to various factors (Mock, 2001; Sibanda, 2004; Niedwiecki, 2006; Goldman, 2008; Akpoghome and Idiegbeyan-Ose, 2010). These include the fact that the specific information needs of seekers are either not well-known to them or not well understood by them. For instance, when a user interacts with the information sources in a library, the user's need may not tally with what is available, which may be due to constraints in access within the stock or a user's own inability to understand library stock or 'library anxiety' as encountered by the user. A user's perception of the library and its programs also acts as an intervening variable to seeking information in the library (Mellon, 1986; Taylor cited in Kakai, Ikoja–Odongo and Kigongo–Bukonya, 2004). Other intervening variables, to seeking information in the library, are attributed to information professionals' heavy emphasis on information technology instead of concentrating on the quality of the information usage in itself. The law teachers do not encourage the law students to utilise law library facilities. Also, lack of relevant sources, such as ICTs and other textual materials in the law library, has been attributed to law students' insufficient use of the law libraries. Adetunmisi (2005) concludes and itemizes some of the factors that tend to adversely affect information seeking behaviour of lawyers or law students as follows:

- Inadequate libraries or information centres with inadequate quality staff
- Economic squeeze
- Lack of relevant and up- to- date information- bearing materials (resources)
- Lack of knowledge of how to obtain required information
- Non- conducive operational hours

Oyediran and Tidings tend to corroborate Adekunmisi (2005) that there is a low patronage of the library by (law) students, which, according to Oyediran and Tidings, may be attributed, to the

non-availability of desired information resources, accessibility problems, and obsolete and absent online facilities. All these can stand as an impediment to law students' poor usage of law libraries to source required information.

### **3.6. ICT utilisation skills of law students**

Several attempts to understand the information utilisation patterns of different groups of professionals and students is inevitable due to the critical role which collection, organisation and dissemination of information globally play in economic, political, and socio-cultural development world-wide. According to the United Nations World Summits on the "Information Society" that were held in Geneva in 2003 and Tunis in 2005, it was pronounced that with the constant growth in information resources and the corresponding growth in information needs and information behaviour of different groups of people in the society, information naturally becomes the key to global developments.

Ossai (2011) studied how law students utilize information resources in the law library. She submits that most of the law students claim to heavily use library resources in the course of their academic programs. But the result of Ossai's study reveals that most of the law students have difficulty in locating and identifying suitable library information sources for case law, legislation and journal articles. Ossai submits that 'law' students should be assisted to frequently utilise library facilities. Similarly, it can be advocated that law students should be encouraged to spend more time in the library than they spend receiving lectures. This will enable them to make maximum use of the library ICT sources and services which, in turn, will lead to an increase in their ICT skills and the effective information usage of the information retrieved. The Australian Law Reform Commission notes that the traditional content based approach of law school curricula does not adequately prepare law graduates for the changing legal workplace. It, therefore, suggests that legal education should focus on what lawyers need to be able to do, rather than anchor around restrictive and outdated notions of what lawyers need to know (ALRC, 1999: Para 2.21; Cuffe, 2002).

### **3.8. Law students' utilisation of digital libraries**

The use of digital libraries by law students is a topic of considerable complexity. Several studies have shown that the problem of under-utilisation of library information resources is a global one. Mann, cited in Olorunfemi (2004), discovered that undergraduate students in Britain complete their course of study with relatively little use of the library resources. Katebi (1972) surveyed the reading habit of students in the University of Tehran and he found that students do not see reading as a way of acquiring knowledge or developing character. This means that students that do not value reading naturally would not utilise the available digital library sources and services.

According to Niedwiecki (2006), the traditional teaching method adopted in teaching law students does not educate nor encourage law students to transfer the acquired knowledge and ICT skills to new situations encountered in law practice. Akpoghome and Idiegbeyan-Ose (2010:110) seem to support that the use of the law library and the available ICT resources by law students are largely not encouraged by the law teachers. The researchers argue that first degree

study in law, as done through the traditional method of teaching adopted by law teachers, which entails direct reading from law textbooks as adopted by law teachers, does not encourage law students to develop a sense of independent research skills (Akpoghome and Idiegbeyan-Ose, 2010). The law teachers tend to teach the law students with the law textbooks, cases and material books, law reports and selected journal articles, which they deem sufficient for the students to pass, while their progress is assessed through performances in examinations (Oke-Samuel, (2008).

Mock (2001) tends to support Akpoghome and Idiegbeyan-Ose (2010) by submitting that law schools have failed to make law students aware of the importance of using informational concepts to find solutions to their academic problems. Mock explained how first year courses might be revised to incorporate information-age perspectives and interests. Information-age refers to the period of widespread access to information, that is, a period characterised by widespread electronic access to information through the use of computer technology.

To corroborate this, Cuffe (2002) examined how Australian law students successfully utilise digital sources. The survey results found that although law students heavily utilised digital sources, the sources were not effectively used because the law students could not transfer the skills to new and different situations. Cuffe, therefore, agrees that law schools do not effectively educate students for the demands of ICTs in law practice. He thus presents a curriculum model that can integrate ICT training into upper-year courses, which can strengthen a law student's lifelong learning experience and interest in using ICT to source information in the future practice of law.

Therefore, Milles (2005) submits that legal educators must accept the important of digital sources in the field of legal research. He urges academic law librarians to consider digital sources when building law library collections and encourage legal research professors to favour electronic resources when providing instruction.

Natalie Cuffe (2002) surveyed law students' skills in dealing with ICTs and its implication for legal information literacy curriculum development. The results of the survey show that despite the rich information and information technology environment surrounding law students and existing ICT skills training, legal curriculum does not seem to have succeeded in the task of educating law students for effective information problem-solving, which is essential in legal practice.

Meanwhile, Khan and Bhatti (2011) studied the information seeking behaviour of legal practitioners. The survey reveals that most of the respondents claim that ICT has made their information seeking process easier, while a few of the respondents rate their information retrieval skill as poor. It is suggested that computer training and internet service should be provided to the lawyers and law students to improve their computer skills.

Thanuskodi (2009) studied the information seeking behaviour of the law faculty at Central Law College, Salem. The study reveals that the respondents use ICT-based library sources and facilities less frequently compared with printed sources, which might be due to a lack of

awareness about their availability, improper selection of materials, or unfamiliarity with the products. Similarly, it is also noted that email is the most popular internet application, whereas other internet-based services and applications are only used by a limited number of respondents.

### **3.9 Challenges and problems of digital libraries in law research**

Sibanda, in Goldman (2008), outlines the challenges facing the teaching of legal information literacy and usage of ICT resources as: an increasing number of undergraduate law students, change of patron expectations, and an increase in pressure to provide support and training for electronic products, connectivity problems, a shortage of hardware and software, and funding reductions.

The problems and challenges of digital libraries, according to Tunkel, in Lawal (2007), lie in the traditional form of legal education taught by law teachers, where students are not taught how to carry out independent research that will take law students to the libraries. Barkan, cited in Lawal (2007), agrees that the curriculum of legal education tends to receive less priority with regard to legal research as opposed to other substantive law courses, which seems to account for the poor research skills of the students.

Oke- Samuel (2008) corroborates that the academic and vocational stages of Nigerian legal education are conducted through lecture and note-taking, with little or no room for interactive teaching methodologies. This seems to support Tunkel (1997), Barkan (2007), and Lawal's (2007) opinion that law teachers do not encourage the use of digital libraries to source information in their studies.

Adekunmisi (2005:28), on the other hand, claims that the challenges are adequate and qualified staff to man the libraries, lack of funds and a lack of a constant power supply. Akpoghome and Idiegbeyan-Ose (2010) agree that inadequate technical staff, unstable staff and insufficient computer literate manpower are the other problems experienced. The constant electricity power supply is the backbone of the virtual library, since the electricity power supply is required to power air conditioners, computer systems and make hardware and software work. Akpoghome and Idiegbeyan-Ose (2010) corroborate that a lack of a constant power supply, as experienced in Nigeria, is a serious drawback and that it is a challenge in managing virtual libraries in Nigerian universities.

Adegbore (2010) also argues that poor funding is the major problem that is generally affecting higher education in Nigeria and that libraries are poorly funded when compared to other departments within the universities. Adegbore attributes the problems and the challenges facing digital libraries to the lack of maintenance culture, a poor power supply, software breakdown and obsolete commercial software. He argues that some of the software designed is so complex that persons having minimal computer knowledge may not understand whether the software is obsolete or attacked by a virus. He, therefore, itemizes the challenges as follows:

- Lack of professionally trained and skilled staff.
- Poor electricity power supply
- Lack of maintenance
- Lack of commitment by staff
- Lack of resources
- Staff training deficiency (Adebore, 2010).

#### **4.0. Conclusions and recommendations**

Most of the results of related literature reviews reveal that the law students do not fully utilise ICTs and library information resources while seeking information in their studies. This is attributed mostly to the lack of exposure to ICT equipment (Chadzingwa, 1997) and the teaching method used in law classes, which does not encourage law students to harness legal information from the law libraries (Tunkel, 1997; Mock, 2001, Barkan, 2007; Lawal, 2007; Oke–Samuel 2008). Therefore, the focus for legal education, in most universities, has traditionally been only on the academic content of courses. Secondly, law students have misconceptions about the roles and values of law libraries and the information professionals in their studies. This results in law students’ adoption of other information seeking strategies that exclude the utilisation of the law libraries and the library staff (Kakai, Ikoja–Odongo and Kigongo–Bukonya, 2004). Also, some of the literature reveals a poor electricity power supply, lack of professional and skilled staff, lack of facility maintenance culture, lack of commitment by staff, lack of resources and a staff training deficiency as other reasons for which law students lack interest in making use of the law library in order to seek information for their studies (Sibanda, 2004; Adekunmisi, 2005; Goldman, 2008; Akpoghome and Idiegbeyan-Ose, 2010; and Adebore, 2010).

The foremost reason for law students’ non-utilisation of computer systems is unfamiliarity with web technologies. Although their attitude to the utilisation of information communication technology in law libraries is encouraging, because they seem to be interested in ICTs, but the problem preventing them from utilising information communication technologies in the law libraries is their unfamiliarity with ICT tools. According to Bennet, cited in Bopape (2010), findings of these studies have some notable consequences for the legal education system

#### **Recommendations**

Based on the above discussion, University authorities should place emphasis on the use of information communication technology in the faculty of law academic curriculum. Law universities should realize that including ICT courses in legal education curricula is an important measure of encouraging the law students to seek and utilise the available e-resources and help in producing the best and most talented law students for future practice.

In order to successfully perform in their law education, law students should endeavour to learn ICT skills in the course of learning to be a lawyer, in order to acquire new knowledge that

was not previously included in the curriculum. This can be achieved through the provision of an ICT programme as a compulsory course that must be passed before graduating.

The government should also encourage the use of library resources through the provision of substantial funds to enable library managers acquire the necessary ICT tools and law databases required in law libraries.

With the harsh climatic weather condition in Nigeria, it is highly recommended that the law libraries should be provided with air conditional to cool down the hot weather and also provide alternative power supply such as, power generating machine that can be switched on whenever there is power outage. This will also attract law students to use the law libraries if they realize they can comfortably study in a cool environment in the library when weather is too hot.

Library professionals must be committed to their jobs, learn to treat the students with some level of respect, and cultivate the maintenance culture by ensuring that necessary repairs are carried out at the right time.

There should be training organized for the junior staff and the non-academic staff and the professional librarians should also improve on their knowledge by attending conferences, workshops and any other means of gathering knowledge in their profession.

The law libraries should generally be made more attractive and be fully equipped with current materials on legal matters, in terms of the electronic materials and law books.

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**Appendix**

**Table 1: List of all Universities offering law degree in Nigeria**

| <b>S/N</b> | <b>Federal Universities</b>         | <b>State Universities</b>                      | <b>Private Universities</b> |
|------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1          | University of Nigeria               | Rivers State University of Science/ Technology | Benson Idahosa University   |
| 2          | Obafemi Awolowo University          | Ambrose Alli University                        | Babcock University          |
| 3          | University of Ibadan.               | Imo State University                           | Lead City University        |
| 4          | University of Lagos.                | Onabanjo State University                      | Afe Babalola University     |
| 5          | Ahmadu Bello University             | University of Ado-Ekiti                        |                             |
| 6          | University of Jos.                  | Lagos State University                         |                             |
| 7          | University of Maiduguri             | Anambra State University                       |                             |
| 8          | University of Calabar.              | Abia State University                          |                             |
| 9          | University of Benin.                | Benue State University                         |                             |
| 10         | University of Ilorin                | Delta State University                         |                             |
| 11         | University of Abuja                 | Enugu State University of Science & Technology |                             |
| 12         | University of Uyo                   | Ebonyi State University                        |                             |
| 13         | Nnamdi Azikiwe university           | Adekunle Ajasin University                     |                             |
| 14         | National Open University of Nigeria | Kogi State University                          |                             |
| 15         |                                     | Nassarawa State University                     |                             |
| 16         |                                     | Osun State University                          |                             |

Source: National Universities Commission 2011. Available at: [http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/nuc/list\\_of\\_approved\\_law\\_univers.htm](http://www.unilorin.edu.ng/nuc/list_of_approved_law_univers.htm)

**Table 2: Level of study of law students' entry qualification at the undergraduate levels**

| <b>S/N</b> | <b>Levels of study</b> | <b>The university general entry Qualification</b>       |
|------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|
| 1          | 100                    | SSCE/GCE Ordinary Level certificate                     |
| 2          | 200                    | Advanced level, first degree, or by promotion from 100L |
| 3          | 300                    | Through promotion                                       |

|   |     |                   |
|---|-----|-------------------|
| 4 | 400 | Through promotion |
| 5 | 500 | Through promotion |