

RECORDS MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY: A CASE STUDY OF DELTA STATE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY, ASABA

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Abstract

Records are information, irrespective of the format on which they appear. Records are important, without records an organization simply cannot function. It is in the height of this that this study examines the effect of records management in organizational operation in delta State House of Assembly, Asaba. Findings from the study revealed that there are no standard methods of inventory and appraisal, no retention/disposition Schedule. There are also no paper storage facilities to cater for the ever growing numbers of records in the assembly. The study recommended that functional records management should be implemented, improved storage facilities and adequate filing system should be utilized.

This study is an attempt to examine the records keeping and management practice at the state house of assembly. In an information generation society, information in various forms is being produced on a daily basis by individuals, governments and corporate bodies. The formats used in the collection and preservation of this information can be appropriately termed records (Kay, 1993). According to Jeffrey (1981) records may be defined as recorded information regardless of media or characteristics. He maintains that records are the evidence of what the organization does and they capture its business activities and transactions such as contract negotiation, business correspondence, personnel files and financial statement.

Saracevic (1991) asserts that information is a vital element in national decision making. The creation, procurement, organization, dissemination and use of information are such vital part of development of a country and a society that without these activities there is no development. Popoola (2000) reported that, information which is the fifth factor of production is our most vital tool today. It is needed daily in the process of planning, decision-making and control. Information is generated and transmitted within every business and governmental organizations for effective management. Records is any piece of information created and received and maintained by an organization or person in the course of their business or conduct of affair and kept as evidence of such activity (Penn, 2001). He further stressed that records can be held in the form of memos, reports, databases, electronic (e-mail), video, audio recordings, compact disc, microform and numerous other formats.

Records contain information vital to the daily operations of a business organization, government. Without records a business for instance cannot function.

Many businesses have ceased to exist as a result of losing their records through disasters like fire or negligence. In the case of government agencies, loss of records especially through fire which is a common feature in some African countries means hardship to the individuals and bodies dealing with those government agencies. Individual may wish to provide evidence of birth date, certificate of graduation or provide tax record for purpose of reference of identification. Failure to find a record for reference or other purpose may lead to frustration. In the government section, failure to obtain a record often times cost money and goodwill. Individual's organizations and institutions therefore ought to keep complete and accurate records. In the business sector for instance, accurate records of earnings, expenses and deductions can result in substantial savings, thereby avoiding overpayment of taxes. Records management as a profession is concerned with the deliberate and calculated attempt at solving the problems posed by paper work explosion, arising from the impact of modern technology. Records management could then be described as the standard and control for records making and keeping, selective records, preservation scheduled records disposed and transfer of record to inactive stage.

Dykeman (1992) maintains that records management is the management of records in the most cost effective manner to achieve the collection, storage and retrieval of information necessary

for decision making in a most optional manner. He asserts that records management is the logical approach to the creation, maintenance, use and disposition of records and the information that those records contain.

To realize the importance of records management, Madeke (1974) opine that records management has a two fold nature and use.

1. They perpetuate the memory of the right and activities of their creator and assist in maintaining its rights and in planning.
2. It furnishes an organization with information on the political. Economic and cultural development of the past.

The values of records are no doubt numerous and these determine how they are kept. The different categories they belong determine how well they are preserved. Records are classified into three types:

1. Records for immediate use
2. Records for limited and long life
3. Records of permanent existence.

Records are basic tools of administration, they are the means by which many operational processes and functions are performed. Records management according to Ette (1984) relates to three stages through which records pass namely: the current, semi- current and non- current / archive stages. At the current stage, records are created and used frequently. In the semi- current stage, which is the intermediate stage, records are referred to occasionally. At the archive stage, records are no longer referred to, but are sent to the archives.

The non- current records are those that have historical and legal value but consultation will not be made to them often so these are sent to the archive (Griffiths and Donalk, 1999) while the non-current records are sent to the archive, the records that are of non value are disposed (Cory, 1995).

Ette (1984) posits that as a result of the above arrangement, the archivist works under a "retention policy" that is already determined administratively. He procures the records after they have been considered non- current by the issuing officers.

Background Information of Delta State House of Assembly

Any house of assembly is the legislative arm of the government. Its primary function is to make laws for the good governance of the state. In this respect, it is saddled with the responsibility of enacting laws which not only support government policies but also guides interaction between the government and the people. Unlike what is obtained at the federal level where the legislature is bicameral i.e. having two houses viz the senate and the House of Representatives. The legislative at the state level is unicameral i.e. it has only one house which is the house of assembly. The house of assembly is headed by the speaker.

Apart from its law- making function, house of assembly is vested with the power to approve important policy thrust of the government. The house has the power to confirm the nomination of commissioners by the executive Governor by the virtue of section 192 subsections 2 of the 1999 constitution. It is also empowered by the same constitution:

1. To make law in order to provide, maintain service and secure essential supplies and services
2. To fix the remunerations of Governors, Deputy Governor and other political functionaries
3. To confirm the appointment of the chief Auditor- General of the state or to recommend his removal from office,
4. To confirm appointment of the chief Judge.
5. To approve the appointment of judicial office and remove from office.
6. To confirm the appointment of the president of the customary court of appeal.
7. To make political functionaries and public office holders to declare their assets and liabilities.

The house of Assembly serve as a check on the executive arm of government as section 188 of the 1999 constitution empowers the legislature to remove the Governor or the deputy from office through impeachment or a vote of no confidence. It is also empowered to monitor and evaluate

government activities, it agencies and parastatals for aggrieved individual and group the house provides a forum to air their grievances through their elected representatives.

Statement of the Problem

One of the greatest challenges facing us today, most especially in our government offices and state house of assembly is that there is no mechanism for controlling the flow of records. It is the responsibility of government official whose duties involves records management to prevent officer from succumbing to an avalanche of information and to take the lead in organizing and operating efficient systems of controlling records and information.

It is unfortunate that the majority of government parastatals do not manage records as expected. As a result the records get deteriorated and will not be available when required. The stuc; therefore aims at the exploration of the various ways of creating and managing records effectively in Delta State House of Assembly, Asaba.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to find out how records are created and managed in Delta Sts:r House of Assembly, Asaba. The study will identify the following

1. To find out how records are created in Delta state house of assembly.
2. To find out how records are used in Delta state house of assembly.

3. To identify the various storage facilities available for records management in Delta state house of assembly.
4. To find out records are maintained for effective use in Delta state house of assembly.
5. To identify problems that militates against effective records management in Delta state house c: assembly.

Research Questions

1. How are records created in Delta state house of assembly?
2. How are records used in Delta state house of assembly?
3. What storage facilities are available for records management in Delta state house >f assembly?
4. How are records maintained for effective use in Delta state house of assembly?
5. What are the problems that militate against records management in Delta state house :\$ assembly?

Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of the study is basically on records management in Delta state house of assemb-j All offices of the house of assembly that are involve in records creation are involved in this stud} E.g. administrative, finance, legal service, editorial, information publication and registry department

Methodology

The main target population of the study consisted of staff and legislative members in thr I Delta State House of Assembly, Asaba. The population comprises the record personnel of the administrative finance, legal service, editorial, and information publication and registry department :>i the state house of assembly. The population of the study is 20.

A total enumeration technique was used. The population is the same with the sample. Tbe sample size is 20.

Table I Records creation

Creation	No of Respondent	Percentage %
After sittings	7	35
After speeches	1	5
After transactions	5	25
All of the above	7	35
Total	20	100

As shown in the Table I, 7 (35%) of the respondents highlighted that records are created after sittings, in the chamber, 5 (25 %) of the respondents indicated that after transactions are made in the Assembly, 1 (5 %) of the respondent indicated that when speeches are given by the state Governor or any other personalities records are created, 7 (35 %) of the respondents indicated all the processes.

**Table II
Use of Records**

Use	No of respondents	Percentage %
Delivery of service	3	15
Administration	6	30
Legal backing	1	5
Historical value	1	5
All of the above	9	45
Total	20	100

The main area of records utilization in the Assembly is for administrative purposes as shown in Table II where 6 (30 %) of the respondents attested. Administration, 3 (15 %) of respondents attested to delivery of service, 1 (5 %) of the respondent indicated historical evidence, 9 (45 %) of the respondent though indicated that the records are used at one time or the other for one or two of the above option due to the need at a particular time.

Table III Storage Facilities

Facilities	No of Respondents	Percentage %
Cabinets	8	40
Boxes	3	15
Slip cases	1	5
CD- Rom	1	5
Flash drives	2	10
Memory card	1	5
File folder	3	15
Magnetic tape	1	5
Total	20	100

Obviously, the result from the Table III clearly show that the Assembly stores majority of their records in the cabinets as attested by 8 (40%) of the respondents, 3 (15%) of the respondents however indicated that storage boxes are also used as a storage facility in the assembly, 1 (5%) of the respondents indicated in slipcases, 1 (5%) of the respondents also said they stored in CD- Rom, 3 (15%) of the respondents attested to file folders.

Table IV
Filing System

System	No of Respondents	Percentage %
Numerically	3	15
Alphabetically	11	55
Chronologically	3	15
All of the above	3	15
Total	20	100

The Table IV highlights numerical filing method as the main filing system adopted by the assembly as 11 (55%) of the respondents said numerical filing, 3 (15%) of the respondents said that in some offices due to the nature of their job use alphabetical filing system.

Table V
Methods of Disposition

Methods	No of Respondents	Percentage %
Shredding	4	20
Pulping	2	10
Burning	8	40
Erasing	2	10
Over- writing	2	10
Marked	2	10
Total	20	100

From Table V, burning is the most common method of disposing the records when they get to the inactive stage, as ticked by 8 (40%) of the respondents. Shredding of the material is yet another method of disposition as affirmed by 4 (20%) of the respondent.

Table VI
Methods of Preservation

Measures	No of Respondents	Percentage %
De- Acidification	0	0
Security	5	25
House keeping	2	10
Insecticides/ Pesticides	3	15
Environmental control	2	10
All of the above	8	40
Total	20	100

From Table VI 8 (40%) of the respondents ticked all of the above. Security is the

most effective measure so far by the response of 5 (25%) of the respondents. This is because the assembly as a whole has adequate security measure in the complex which includes the records.

Table VII
Problem Militating Against Records Management

Problems	No of Respondents	Percentage %
Inadequate skilled staff	6	30
Financial problem	2	10
Lack of awareness	1	5
Attitude of staff	2	10

Environmental condition	1	5
Inadequate storage facilities	7	35
Management	1	5
Total	20	100

The main problem plaguing the management of the records in the Assembly is inadequate storage facilities as 7 (35%) of the respondents confirmed it clearly, the staff to manage the records are not qualified enough in records management, indicated 6 (30%). Financial problem and attitude of the staff received 2 (10%) of the respondents each as the factors militating against the proper management of their records.

Discussion and Implication of the Study

From Table I, 7 (35%) of respondent indicate that records are created after sitting while 5(25%) indicated that after transactions are made in the Assembly records are created.

1(5%) of the respondent indicated that when speech are given by the state Governor or any other presentation records are created, 7(35%) of the respondents indicated all the processes. From the findings, few records are created in one way <3r the other. Records creation is an important aspect of records management even though it is not taken seriously in the Nigerian administrative system (Iwhiwhu, 1998).

From Table II, records were used more for administration, 6(30%) attested to the use of administrative records.

While 1(5%) of the respondent indicate to legal backing and 1(5%) of the respondent indicated historical value. This is in line with Mazikana (1999) when he noted that records are used for verification of facts, compilation of reports and studies, research findings of precedents collection of statistical data, policy formulation, planning and implementation, handling of legal claims, project planning, evaluation, litigation and administration. The result from Table III clearly shows that the house of assembly stores majority of their records in the cabinets as attested by 8(40%) of the respondents. Hopler (1976) notes that records are the life blood of any organization and to treat the matter of storage and protection of the records lightly would be foolhardy. He further argues that records which are properly stored will be the mercy of agents of records destruction such as rats, termites, fungi, mould, heat, humidity and even human destruction agents like theft and vandalism. The Table IV highlights numerical filing method as the main filing system adopted by the assembly as 11(55%) of the respondents indicated numerical filing, while 3(15%) of the respondents attested to the use of alphabetical filing system. Popoola (2000) asserted that filing system ought to permit ready determination of records of ending value, periodic destruction of records of transitory value and timely transfer of semi- active and inactive records center for reference services. From Table IV, burning is the most common method of disposing records when they get to the inactive stage, 8(40%) indicated burning as a means of disposal, while 4(20%) of the respondents indicated shredding as another method of disposition. This is in line with Barkowski (1984) when he advise that non-essential records can be disposed of by burning, maceration, pulping or shredding and pulverizing. From Table VI 8(40%) of the respondents ticked all of the above. Security is the most effective measure so far by the response of 5(35%) of the respondents. This may probably be due to the fact that

the assembly has adequate security measures in the complex. From Table VII the main problem plaguing the management of the records in the assembly is inadequate storage facilities, as 7(35%) of the respondents confirmed it clearly. Other problems of records management are unqualified personnel, funds and attitude of staff towards records management.

Conclusion and Recommendation

In every state, the House of Assembly is responsible for making and passing out laws of states to its citizen. And in this aspect. Delta State House of Assembly, Asaba is to be commended but to serve better in this regard, necessary measure must be taken to have access to timely and appropriate information. The study revealed that there are problems militating against records management, vital information are not properly filed and stored for easy retrieval. There are problems of inadequate

storage facilities. However, a standard and well- designed records management program will go a long way to assist the Assembly in rendering better service to Deltans and Nigerians as a whole.

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