

Differences between competitive Advantage and competitive intelligence in Legislative libraries

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Abstract

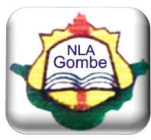
The paper gave an overview of what a legislature and library mean. A descriptive research method was used in carrying out this work. It looked at the following among others, concepts of competitive advantage and competitive intelligence as it relates to the library, library as a service delivery institution, general library services, and application of competitive advantage and competitive intelligence to library and concluded that competitive advantage and competitive intelligence are needed in libraries to provide better library services.

Key Words: Competitive intelligence, Competitive advantage, library, Legislature, Legislative library.

Introduction

The legislature is a unique institution in any democratic setting, it is made up of the elected representatives of the people and regarded as the most notable symbol of democracy. The legislature occupies the most prominent position in modern democracies, and it comprises of the legislative arm of government. A Library Strives to play a role in the teaching, learning and provision of research materials to its parent institution. It is aggressively dynamic in the provision of its services and manned by staff of the highest quality, who have proper background knowledge to meet the challenges of modern library setting. Users expectation of any library and information setting is to make available directly or remotely and timely the needed information, notwithstanding the format. The Legislative library are libraries attached to legislative institutions to ensure the provision of quick and easily accessible resources to the users.

The nature of the traditional library has changed drastically with the advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The Information and communication technology has enable most library to cope with the great increases in demand without increases in staffing and has enabled library to provide a much wider ranges of services, to improve the quality of work performed by the users in searching for information. United Nation (2012) opines that parliamentary libraries have special role to play in ensuring that these demands are met by legislatures. They are used to provide information services to all members and committees, to parliamentary staff and the public. According to Yaya etal (2014) Library and information science professionals need to use innovative and creative ways to meet diverse information needs of their users. It is particularly important as the work environment is becoming increasingly complex, competitive, the legislative libraries need to react immediately to changes happening in their external environments. Dorabjee (2011) argues that the following similarities exist between LIS and CI: -Both CI and LIS acquire, manage and exploit external information sources to support business decisions.



The core function of legislative libraries are found under the different department in legislative libraries which are listed as follows among others.

Readers Services department: This department is made up of the Circulation unit, Serial unit, Government document unit, Reference service unit among others

Technical services department: This is usually called the behind the scene, it is involved in collection development and acquisition of materials, as well as procession of those materials to enhance easy accessibility by the users.

Automation or ICT: An automated unit or an Information and Communication Technology unit consist of not only the facilities and formats, but also the essential human elements of the library users and staff.

Administration: These involves the general administrative management of the library.

However competitive advantage and competitive intelligence are essential instrument use in legislative libraries to enable them carry out the above responsibilities and promote effective and efficient service delivery to the legislatures. Competitive advantage enable the library to give a superior way of doing the same work, while competitive intelligence help in gathering and analyzing information about the competitors and using it to their own advantage.

Methodology

The method employed in this work is a descriptive research design. It looked at the competitive advantage and the competitive intelligence in relation to a legislative library setting.

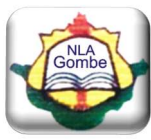
Concepts of Competitive Advantage and Competitive Intelligence

Competitive Advantage

According to Barney (1995) competitive advantage means superior performance relative to other competitors in the same industry or superior performance relative to the industry average. It is also superiority gained by an organization when it can provide the same value as its competitors but at a lower price, or can charge higher prices by providing greater value through differentiation, competitive advantage results from matching core competencies to the opportunities.

Competitive Intelligence

Competitive intelligence is the result of a company's efforts to gather and analyze information about its industry, business environment, competitors, and competitive products and services. The information-gathering and analysis process can help a company develop its strategy or identify competitive gaps. Competitive intelligence is of great help in crafting strategies for competing with other firms, by developing an understanding of the industry and the competitors as well. It is beneficial in identifying the strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats. By engaging in competitive intelligence, the firm can successfully become the market leader and find best practices to do business. According to Bloomethal (2020) Competitive intelligence, sometimes referred to as corporate intelligence, refers to the ability to gather, analyze, and use information collected on competitors, customers, and other market factors that contribute to a business's competitive advantage. Fuld (2011) opines that sometime it's almost easier to describe what intelligence is not, rather than what it is. According to him it is not ream of data base print out. It is not necessarily thick, densely written reports. And most certainly it is not spying or stealing or bugging. In its most basic description, intelligence is "analyzed information". Pellissier & Nenzhelele (2013) argues that Competitive intelligence (CI) is a



critical success factor for-profit and non-profit, large and small, public and private firms. (Du Toit & Sewdass (2014) says CI improves product or service quality, quality of decisions and quality of life.

Differences between Competitive Advantage (CA) and Competitive Intelligence (CI) as related to legislative library services

The following differences between Competitive Advantage and competitive Intelligence as related to Library and Information Services

-CI is clearly a strategic activity, closely aligned with and embedded within the business units. CA uses the superior aspect of the information in the library to do better than other libraries. LIS is more often than not, less strategic but performs a perhaps wider corporate service focusing on content management and delivery. The management of a library means, in easy words, efficient and effective management of material, machinery, men and money to meet the objectives of the library.

-Whilst some sources may be common to both, the use to which they are put and the way they are analyzed may be different to ensure their superiority from others.

-CI professionals are rarely from a traditional information background (let alone from a library). They are more likely to be from a business or marketing background. Their skills in identifying, negotiating for, exploiting and managing public domain content may therefore not be as comprehensive as that of the information professional, CA is achieved or acquired by offering unique product.

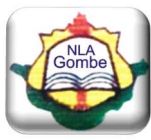
-CI professionals tend to be more extroverts, outgoing and visible within their business area, CA achieve superior performance by producing similar quality product, whilst those in LIS cover a wider but perhaps more passive activity within the whole organization.

-The status of CI therefore tends to be a business partner rather than a valuable support service underpinning all information activities, which characterizes LIS. CA give superior support to services offer by the library.

-Competitive intelligence practices involve ethical and legitimate research and information-gathering such as studying a company's social media posts for specifics that might reveal the timing of a product launch. While libraries are involve in the acquisition of resources to enhance users research activities. CA ensure the provision of superior research activities.

- Bloomethal (2020) listed the following keyway to competitive intelligence Competitive intelligence refers to the ability to gather and use information on factors that affect a company's competitive advantage.
- Organizations analyze collected data and information to develop effective and efficient business practices.
- Competitive intelligence can be classified as myopic-oriented, tactical intelligence or long-term focused strategic intelligence.
- Gathering data and information is more complex than conducting a simple Internet search.

The general foundation for departmentation is function. Practically all libraries exploit this form of departmentation which divides a library into functional departments such as acquisition, processing, reference services, bibliography, stock maintenance, circulation, information and documentation services, etc. Departmentation based on function, are easy, logical and time-proved way, has the advantages of allowing occupational specialization, helping the simple assessment of the contribution of each subunit, simplifying training, allowing for defining the authority and prestige as well as tight manage of each action through top management and ensuring economy in resource utilization. Though, the disadvantages of this way contain unhealthy competition for possessions, disagreements on general works,



distancing of home keeping operations from customers, fostering sub-goal loyalties, making of "walls" approximately departments; difficulties in achieving coordination and responsibilities resting only with chief executives. It may be noted that wide geographical sharing, heterogeneous customer clusters and different services approach in the method of functional departmentation. Yet, many libraries exploit this way for organizing their job and service.

Legislative library competitors: The libraries are not just built or kept for book keeping and welcoming of users. Their jobs are numerous, ranging from guidance, referrals, providing internet services to information literacy among others. Their activities are also geared towards a good governable environment as they house and give out materials that will help educating citizens of their nations run a better Nmecha et al (2017). In our society today, Legislative libraries all over the world are having some competitors that are competing with their service, therefore urgent steps needs to be taken if not these organizations may send librarians out of their laudable profession, these include:

- i.) Internet and web sites providers
- ii.) Telecommunication (telephone) operators
- iii.) E-journals and e-books providers
- iv.) Online vendors e.g. Law pavilion, Legalpedia, Microsoft Academic, Ebscohost, Jstor, my library, Science direct, Agora, E-granary among other.
- v.) Special and private information centers
- vi.) Archives and documentation centers

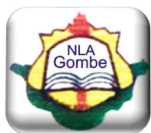
Unfortunately, the abovementioned competitors are well equipped with sophisticated technology, current library resources and adequate funding that enhance their ability to provide much needed information to the information users; which has made information users to develop little or no interest in visiting the library for any help, except during critical period when large population of readers visit the library.

Library as Service delivery Institution

Libraries are set up in institutions to ensure service delivery. Librarians and information scientists serve the people through the provision of quality information resources in print or electronic formats in which the people access to ensure an improved standard of living, actualization of dreams, sound decisions are made and executed, education is sustained, freedom of expression is enhanced and information resources are preserved for posterity. Information explosion has also lead to the innovation of libraries and librarianship. IFLA (2011) posits that the core mission of library and information professionals is to facilitate access to information for all for personal development, education, cultural enrichment, economic activity and informed participation in and enhancement of democracy. Librarians do not encourage censorship, denial and restriction of information to anybody by any person or groups of persons and use the most efficient and effective methods and standards to serve their clientele.

However, It should be reiterated here that library is not a profit oriented organization but it renders social services to support the educational and research activities of its parent institutions, hence, the head librarian of such a library needs competitive advantage and competitive intelligence to provide superior resources, gather actionable information and make decision on the relevant resources he/she has to select, acquire, process and disseminate to satisfy the information needs of his library users.

Library services



The library provide service to every individual in the community in which it is situated and these services should be one of the fundamental human rights of every citizen. The services provided depend on the objectives of the parent organization, it differ from one library to another but there are certain services that are common to all libraries. The major services provided by libraries are categories under three major departments which has other sub heading as follows: Readers serviced department, Technical services department and Automation or ICT. The most prominent of them to users are the readers' services and automation services which directly involved the users.

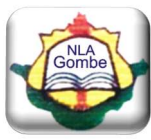
The Readers Services Department has the Following sub in most libraries Circulation unit in charge of leading, interlibrary loan or document delivery, reservation or short term loan, Provision of seating and studying facilities and provision of special reservation room, Current awareness services, Selective dissemination of information, Provision of Serial services, Reference services, Government document services, Exhibition and display, library education, information literacy programme, Library publication among others.

Lending services: This is the most prominent of all of them all and the most important service provided by a library. It is a social service in which users are given the privilege of borrowing library materials either for reading or for consultation. These materials include books, journals, serial publications, albums, audiocassettes, slides, videotapes, films, projectors, cassettes and video-machines etc. To promote equal and fair access to library holdings, lending out library materials is considered to be very fundamental. However, in borrowing library materials, certain processes have to be followed. The records of transactions of the materials to be borrowed must be documented or charged, that is the records must be kept in the library and the library material checked out. It is important to keep a proper record of the borrower in order to be able to trace the borrower if the book/library material is not returned when due.

Inter-library loan (ILL) and document delivery service: The transactions involves two or more libraries working together to provide services for their users.

A library which does not have a particular library material desired by one of its user will borrow the material requested from another library on behalf of the user who needs the materials. The lending library provides substitutes of the original materials, especially journal articles. However, not all materials can be loaned out to libraries through inter library loans. These materials include, reference sources, rare books, fragile materials, periodicals, audiovisual materials, dissertations, which are not normally loaned out. ILL is very important where the resources of a library are limited because the library will ensure that only important and affordable materials are purchased while the rest are made available to readers through ILL. Once ILL is running well, access to a large number of documents is guaranteed.

Reservation service/ Short term loan: Reservation/ short term loan of library resources is very common in academic and school libraries. Not with standing it is also found in other library depending on the material in question. There are some documents that merit being reserved or put on the hold for use only in the library because clients heavily use them or they are high-risk books that could be stolen or mutilated if they are kept on the open shelves. Such materials cannot be lent out like other books; hence they are removed from the open stacks. In such a situation, such documents are kept in a restricted area where they could be loaned out for a limited period. Books that are kept in the reserve / short term loan section can only be used within the library for a certain period, which could be for two hours or more. In some cases, readers may be allowed to take them out overnight and it must be returned the following day immediately the library opens. One of the advantages of a reserve / short term loan



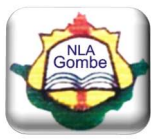
collection is that if it is found that some documents are very popular, the library could decide to purchase multiple copies of such books. However, two main problems with these collections are that sometimes, the waiting time may be too long for popular books, as well as the fact that the materials are kept in closed stack, which users cannot browse through. The circulation section of a library is responsible for this service.

Provision of seating and study facilities/ special reservation room: The library provide seating facilities for its readers so that they can consult and read books of interest to them, hence the need to provide a suitable space environment. For this, libraries do provide seats and reading tables for readers who intend to use the library for research or any serious academic activity, legislative, academic, large public libraries and some special libraries provide study carrels and special rooms. These are single study facilities for one or two people. The carrels or special rooms are generally in a secluded place far from the general reading area. They could be separate single rooms or cubicles. Any reader wishing to make use of a carrel must request for it in writing before use or is specifically reserved for special set of users. The libraries also provide equipment and other facilities necessary for viewing and listening to audiovisual materials.

Reference services: This is an important function of any library. Readers are provided this service on request or use the facilities in that section to meet their research or academic needs. People have different reference queries that need to be solved by the librarian. Hence, it is generally a person to person service. In many cases, reference processes involve interviewing the reader to enable the reference librarian articulate the problem of the user clearly. The reference librarian then prepares a search strategy by translating the reference queries into the language of the system used in preparing the library catalogue. The result of the interview will enable the reference librarian to determine what sources in the library to use in order to provide answers to the queries.

Government Publication / Serial publication: This is the provision of publication from government institution or organization to enhance user easy access in their research as well as in the use of serial such as newspapers, magazines for the provision of current affair information around them among others.

Current Awareness Service (CAS): This is the provision of up to date information for the library users. This is to ensure that users are aware of recent developments in their fields of interest; to make the users informed of latest documents available in the library or information obtainable elsewhere. These information can be made available to the users through telephone calls, e-mail messages, letters, preprints of papers, photocopy of table of contents, periodicals routings, maintenance of card files of references, library bulletins, subscription to specialized services, electronic news groups, etc. Also, back covers of a selection of recent acquisitions could be displayed. It could be noted that CAS is always provided to users in broad subject categories without necessarily targeting a particular user. Thus, CAS is not a personalized service. Information is usually provided on a variety of documents like journals, books, conference proceedings, theses and dissertations, newspapers and magazines. It could be emphasized here that the information gathering component of competitive intelligence falls within the expertise of Information Professionals (Berner, 2001). Hence, they can use various online services providing an increasing number of ways to analyze search results, and then present information in "intelligent" reports more easily than ever before, and initiate the communication needed to move intelligence to where it is needed.



Exhibition and displays: This is a process in which the library advertises the services and resources. This enhances the superiority in the information gathered by the library. A display draws the attention of library users to the services rendered by the library. It publicizes the services through illustrative materials on display stands, display boards, etc. Exhibition on the other hand, is generally to stimulate readers' interest on a particular area of interest to the community or of study. For example, library materials on a particular topic that might be of interest to the public could be exhibited. These materials could also be exhibited or displayed during a conference or workshop of the interested group.

Library publications: This is a process whereby the library issues out publications to guide users in the use of library facilities and resources. Example is the library guide. This publication provides detailed and accurate information about the library. It is written in simple language with minimum librarianship terminologies. The library guides are well illustrated with coloured photographs, especially of some landmark areas in the library. It contains the physical and postal addresses of the library, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail and web site addresses. The guide contains the procedures for registration, opening and closing hours and other library facilities available to facilitate effective and efficient library use.

User education: This is a process where users are equipped with enough knowledge on the use of the library. It will enable them use the library resources effectively and efficiently. Through user education, the user is able to get any information he/she desires as well as developing the skills to use the resources of the library independently. The user education is imparted through one-to-one sessions, library orientation/tours or classroom instruction.

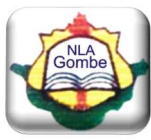
Information literacy programme: This is a more holistic programme of user education. Many large libraries, especially university and research libraries emphasize the need for users to acquire skills that will enable them search for information independently on any aspect of knowledge using both traditional and electronic methods of accessing information. This is geared towards attaining a competence in the use of library and computer networks/technologies. Apart from the above general library services, there are also specialized services that are peculiar to some types of libraries. Such services include: i.) Literature search service ii.) Selective dissemination of information (SDI) iii.) Retrieval services iv.) Translation service v.) Extension and outreach services vi.) Rental of library premises for public usage among others.

Electronic Bulletin boards: It is a high Tech communication which gives intelligence, one of the most powerful weapons to imagine. This helps in providing superior information and analyzing them for the users.

CD-ROMs: This records the whole content of libraries' books and records. It enhances easy access to a lot of information.

Virtual libraries: This has built numerous networks, linking their catalogues with one another. It enables its users to sit at his or her computer terminal and pull up an arcane PhD dissertation or conference paper and other reference resources in full.

Database: This is the collection of a pool of information that is recorded, indexed and stored on a computer. It is a computerized reference book.



Photocopying services: This is the provision of photo copying facilities to the users who would want to photo copy pages of articles to help them in their research work. This will also help in reduction of mutilation of the library materials by users removing some pages from books.

Application of competitive Advantage and competitive intelligence to librarianship

In applying competitive advantage and competitive intelligence into the operations of Legislative library, a careful look at M Porter's two types of competitive advantage cannot be over emphasized and the competitive intelligence cycle and its process of gathering, analyzing and disseminating of information would be used. It is presented in Figure 1. And 2 in the diagram below.

Cost advantage. Porter argued that a company could achieve superior performance by producing similar quality products or services but at lower costs. In this case, company sells products at the same price as competitors but reaps higher profit margins because of lower production costs. Example making photocopies and binding of materials for users at a lower price than other library which help is saving materials in the library from mutilation.

Differentiation advantage. This is achieved by offering unique products and services and charging premium price for that. Differentiation strategy is used in this situation and company positions itself more on branding, advertising, design, quality and new product development rather than efficiency, outsourcing or process innovation. Customers are willing to pay higher price only for unique features and the best quality. Marketing of information materials and databases available in the library to users, enhance its uses in their research and ensure easy accessibility and provision of robotic research work.

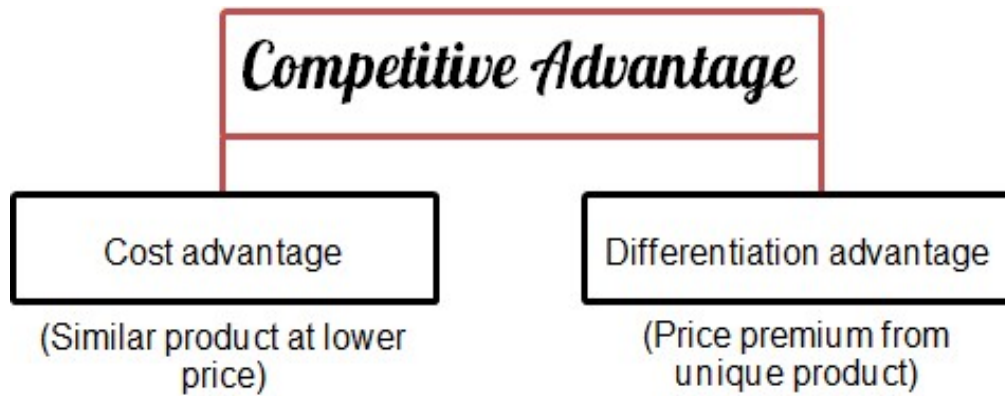
The cost leadership and differentiation strategies are not the only strategies used to gain competitive advantage. Innovation strategy is used to develop new or better products, processes or business models that grant competitive edge over competitors.

Planning and direction: According to Nikolaos and Evangelia (2012) this is the first stage of the intelligence cycle, which requires the identification of the key intelligence topics and the determination of the course the CI practitioner should take in completing the analysis. The planning & direction step can also be thought as the other end of the intelligence cycle, since once the desired intelligence is delivered to the decision makers the subsequent actions will prompt further intelligence requirements (Kahaner, 1996). In the legislative library set up, the library resources are to be planned in line with the legislature's interest (e.g. Political science, legislative process, democracy).

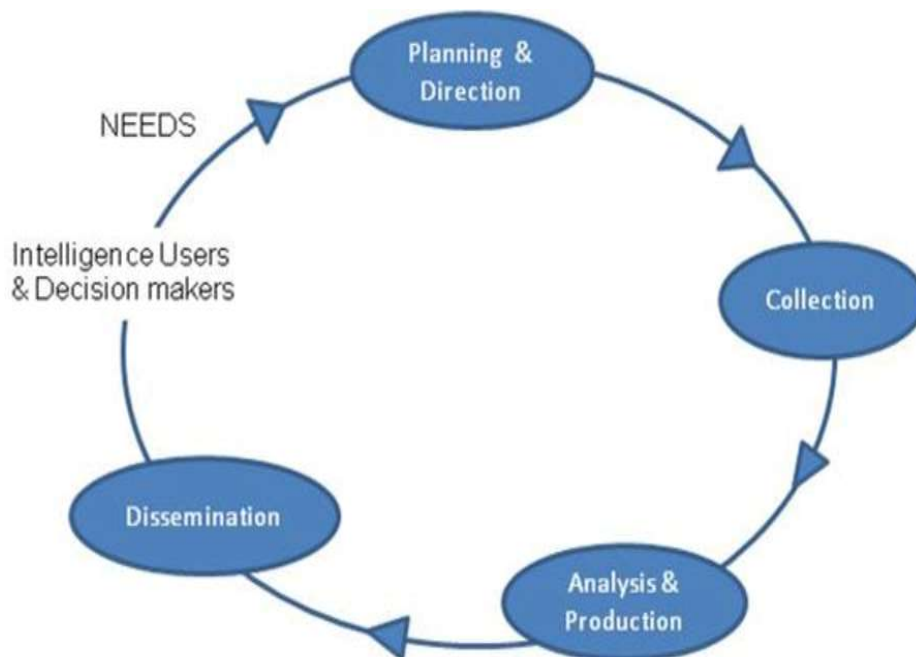
The librarian will not acquire materials contrary to the interest of the legislators, else they (library collections) will not satisfy the information needs of the legislative community.

Diagram

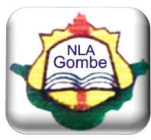
Figure 1. M. Porter has identified 2 basic types of competitive advantage: cost and differentiation advantage.



Competitive Intelligence Figure 2. The competitive intelligence cycle. [Source: Adapted from Sawka, 2008:34 cited in Nikolaos & Evagelia, 2012:4]



Collection: The collection phase involves the gathering of raw information from which the required intelligence should be generated. A large amount of the collected information comes from publicly available materials, which include periodicals, annual reports, books, internet sources, newspapers and other printed or unprinted sources. Most CI practitioners find all the information they require ethically and legally. This phase also includes the processing of information so that it can be easily transmitted and electronically stored (Nikolaos and Evangelia, 2012). In acquiring legislative materials into the library, the librarian will not single handedly procure all the materials he/she deem relevant to the Legislative Assembly, rather, he will send memo to all the departments requesting for their input in the selection processes. Sometimes, the publisher catalogues or the vendors’ lists may be sent to the departments, researchers or experts in their field of knowledge asking them to select relevant materials for their subject areas. These are done so that relevant stakeholders in the legislative community will take active part in the selection and acquisition of the library collections.

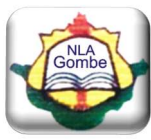


Analysis and production: This phase is known to be the most challenging part of the intelligence cycle, since it requires high skilled CI practitioners. More specifically, the person performing such an analysis needs to weigh information, look for patterns and come up with different scenarios based on what the analyst has discovered (Nikolaos and Evangelia, 2012).

Moreover, Taib et al., (2008) as cited by Yaya et al (2014) point out that in practice, there are always two ways in which analysis is used in the entire process. The first is the use of analysis to make a selection, such as deciding which of a dozen news articles is most important to read. The second is the use of analysis to add value to one or more pieces of data. That would mean, for example, adding a statement to a summary of an article indicating why and how its contents are important to the end user. While CI analysts provide both types of analysis, end users most frequently only regard the latter process as really being analysis. Hence, if you do not use some analysis during the collection process, you will waste hours of time collecting useless information that takes you nowhere. However, requests sent to the library may not have detailed, correct bibliographic information such as author, title, current edition, International Standard Book Number (ISBN), price, publishers, place of publication and other bibliographic details; the librarian will then analyse all the requests by using some collection development tools like: publishers catalogues, Books in print (BIP), Whitaker books in print, National Bibliography of Nigeria (NBN) and other acquisition tools to provide those bibliographic details that are lacking in their requests before procuring them into the library collections.

Dissemination: This is the last stage of the intelligence cycle. It is the step where the CI practitioner communicates the results of the analysis to the decision makers. The analyst must be able to suggest possible courses of action based on the work analysis and provide useful recommendations which must be supported by logical arguments, if requested (Nikolaos and Evangelia, 2012). The hallmark of any legislative library is to provide information to all information seekers and also to support the interest of the parent institution. The librarian after the collation and careful analysis of the selected titles, he/she will then acquire the materials either through direct purchase, exchange and gift or by legal deposit. The materials are processed and put on the library shelves for easy accessibility by the library users.

Conclusion: Libraries need to use superior innovative and creative ways to meet diverse information needs of their users. It is particularly important as the work environment is becoming increasingly complex and competitive, and legislative libraries need to react immediately to changes happening in their external environments. It is, therefore, crucial for legislatures, researchers and other staff in these legislative assembly to have quick access to high quality, accurate, up-to-date and reliable information to make timely and well informed decisions. Information professionals, in addition to providing traditional library services, need to use non-traditional and innovative methods to meet highly specialized information needs of their users. One such method that could be used is the development of competitive advantage and intelligence by the heads of these libraries. As traditional information sources are relatively less useful in gathering actionable information, LIS professionals need to identify and use a variety of non-traditional information sources such as competitive advantage and competitive intelligence that would enable the legislative library to edge out its competitors and make library users to develop renewed interest in the services provided by the library in meeting their information needs.



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