



DATABASE MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS USED BY SECRETARIES IN MANAGING RECORDS IN THE CIVIL SERVICE OF ANAMBRA STATE

Oguejiofor, Chinwe. S Ph.D
*Department of Business Education
Madonna University Nigeria*

Umeh, Ugonwa. F Ph.D
*Department of Business Education
Madonna University Nigeria*

Abstract

This study determined the database management functions used by the secretaries in managing office records in the civil service of Anambra State. Structured questionnaire was used. The instrument was validated by three experts. Its internal consistency was determined using Cronbach Alpha and the result was high reliability coefficient of 0.64. Data collection were analysed using mean and standard deviation, while ANOVA was used to test the null hypothesis. The findings showed that secretaries used all the database management functions identified by this study. Based on the findings, it was recommended amongst others that there was need for various forms of inservice training in the area of electronic records management in offices to equip secretaries with skills needed to manage records.
Keywords: Database, Functions, Secretaries, Records

Introduction

The world has gone technological and this has permeated every field of endeavour including education. Technologies have been used recently to achieve success in the delivery instructions in schools and offices. As some of these technologies are becoming obsolete, others are emerging with more complexities in operations and application. The advent of office automation has changed the nature, composition and role of the office. The various professional services offered in offices are seriously adjusting to the ethics and modes of operation that can stand the test of time. Nwosu (1998) suggested that secretaries today require new sets of skills and competencies in the application of office functions for information processing, management, employment, office productivity, job retention, job success and job satisfaction.

Every organization strives to achieve efficiently and effectiveness in their daily activities to realize target goals. These goals cannot be achieved if the secretaries are not equipped with new skills and competencies. Nwosu (1998) also stated that the secretaries who are not well equipped with these skills, knowledge and abilities will soon render themselves obsolete, redundant or even thrown out of jobs. There is no doubt that the stereotype picture of the secretary of the past completely with traditional office competencies is beginning to fade and the image of the new secretary with electronic competencies is emerging. Organizations need secretaries who can carry out organizational activities effectively and this cannot be possible without effective records



management practices. The uses of paper in the office results to much file creation, hence file management with its challenges which includes delay in retrieval of information. According to Oguejiofor (2015), traditional filing management is fast becoming obsolete and therefore not helpful in the adoption of much needed best global practices in offices.

To understand what database is, one must be familiar with three terms: files, records and field. A file is a collection of information on some subject. A record contains the information about one entry in the file. However, within a record, there exist fields or spaces for specific information. Sawyer and Williams (2001) stated that database management systems are improvements over file management systems. Database management systems software, controls the structure of a database and access to data. It is the software that permits an organization to centralize data, manage them effectively and provide access to stored data by application programs. It can store information, and has the capability of sorting, searching, compiling, combining and manipulating data (Azuka and Azuka, 2012).

A database therefore, is a structured collection of information organized for easy access (Agomuo, 2005). It is a collection of logically related files. It is an all-encompassing term, which describes anything from an address book, dictionary, or file cabinet to a set of computerized data files with sophisticated data relationship. Data are known facts that can be recorded and that have implicit meaning. For example, when one considers the names, telephone numbers, and addresses of the people one knows, one may have recorded this data in an indexed address book or may have stored it on a diskette, using a personal computer and software such as DBASE IV or V, Microsoft Access, or Excel.

The database approach listed some very characteristic features which include:

Concurrent Use: A database system allows several users to access the database concurrently. Answering different questions from different users with the same (base) data as a central aspect of an information system. Such concurrent use of data increases the economy of a system. An example of concurrent use is the travel database of a big travel agency. The employees of different branches can access the database concurrently and book journeys for their clients. Each travel agent sees on his interface if there are still seats available for a specific journey or if it is already fully booked.

Structured and Described Data: A fundamental feature of the database approach is that the database systems does not only contain the data but also the complete definition and description of these data. These descriptions are basically details about the extent, the structure, the type and the format of all data and, additionally, the relationship between the data. This kind of stored data is called metadata (“data about data”).

Separation of Data and Applications: As described in the feature structured data, the structure of a database is described through metadata which is also stored in the database. An application software does not need any knowledge about the physical data storage



like encoding, format, storage place, and so on. It only communicates with the management system of a database (DBMS). The access to the data and the metadata is entirely done by the DBMS. In this way all the applications can be totally separated from the data. Therefore database internal reorganizations or improvement of efficiency do not have any influence on the application software.

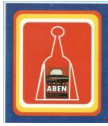
Data Integrity: Data integrity is a byword for the quality and the reliability of the data of a database system. In a broader sense data integrity includes also the protection of the database from unauthorized access (confidentiality) and unauthorized changes. Data reflect facts of the real world.

Transactions: A transaction is a bundle of actions which are done within a database to bring it from one consistent state to a new consistent state. A transaction is atomic which means that it cannot be divided up any further. Within a transaction all or none of the actions need to be carried out. Doing only a part of the actions would lead to an inconsistent database state. One example of a transaction is the transfer of an amount of money from one bank account to another. The debit of the money from one account and the credit of it to another account makes together a consistent transaction. This transaction is also atomic. The debit or credit alone would both lead to an inconsistent state. After finishing the transaction (debit and credit) the changes to both accounts become persistent and the one who gave the money has now less money on his account while the receiver has now a higher balance.

Data Persistence: Data persistence means that in a DBMS all data is maintained as long as it is not deleted explicitly. The life span of data needs to be determined directly or indirectly by the user and must not be dependent on system features. Additionally data once stored in a database must not be lost. Changes of a database which are done by a transaction are persistent. When a transaction is finished even a system crash cannot put the data in danger.

Database management is beneficial to offices because they offer:-

- (a) Improved strategic use of corporate data
- (b) Reduced complexity of the organization's information systems environment
- (c) Reduced data redundancy and inconsistency
- (d) Enhanced data integrity
- (e) Application-data independence
- (f) Improved security
- (g) Reduced application development and maintenance costs
- (h) Improved flexibility of information systems
- (i) Increased access and availability of data and information
- (j) Logical & Physical data independence
- (k) Concurrent access anomalies
- (l) Facilitate atomicity problem.



(m) Provides central control on the system through DBA.

Chukwumezie (2005), therefore advised secretaries to recognize and appreciate the potentials of these electronic filing methods, since the filing of information held in paper disk or films are important functions of secretaries in automated offices. It is in view of this that this paper sought to determine the database management functions use by secretaries in managing office records in the civil service of Anambra State.

The purpose of the study therefore was to determine the database management competencies used by secretaries in managing office records in Anambra State civil service.

Research Questions

The study was guided by one research question: What are the database management functions used by secretaries in managing records in Anambra State civil service?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance: There is no significance difference in the mean ratings of secretaries in the civil service of Anambra State on the database functions used by secretaries in managing office records based on the size of the ministry.

Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design as the study sought to determine the database management functions used by secretaries in managing records in Anambra State civil service. The secretaries in Anambra State civil service formed the population of this study. The respondents were asked to rate each of the items on a four point scale of; often used (4) sometimes used (3) rarely used (2) never used (1). The instrument for data collection was validated through expert judgement. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach alpha. The instrument yielded approximated reliability indices of 0.64. The boundary limit of 2.50 was used to determine the acceptability of questionnaire items. Any function with a mean score of 2.50 and above was considered used and a function with a mean score below 2.50 was considered not used by the secretaries.

Results

What are the database management functions used by secretaries in managing records in Anambra State civil service.



Table 1: Mean responses on database management functions used by secretaries

S/N	ITEMS	\bar{X}	SD	Decision
1.	Ability to develop data entry screens	2.57	1.39	Used
2.	Skills in developing data forms	2.82	1.22	Used
3.	Competencies in using data reports	2.67	1.11	Used
4.	Skill in developing web pages	2.92	1.26	Used
5.	Ability to sort data in sequence	3.08	1.12	Used
6.	Ability to separate data	3.08	1.12	Used
7.	Ability to maintain data integrity	2.92	1.26	Used
8.	Ability to access data base concurrently	3.17	1.06	Used

The result in Table 1 shows that all the listed items on the database management competencies were used by secretaries in the civil service of Anambra State. This is because each of the items obtained a mean score above 2.50. This implies that the respondents rated all the competency items as used.

Table 2: ANOVA analyses of the ratings of Civil Service Secretaries base on size of Ministry

Item	Source of variance	Df	Sum of square	Mean square	F.cal	F.crit	Decision																																																																																
33	Between	2	152.9806	76.4903	54.0154	3.84	Reject																																																																																
	Within	295	417.7443	1.4161				34	Between	2	78.9931	39.4963	32.2507	3.84	Reject	Within	295	361.2787	1.2247	35	Between	2	5.0205	2.5103	2.0489	3.84	Accept	Within	295	361.4224	1.2252	36	Between	2	36.0994	18.0499	12.2228	3.84	Reject	Within	295	435.6322	1.4767	37	Between	2	4.1527	2.0763	1.3067	3.84	Accept	Within	295	468.7500	1.5890	38	Between	2	4.1527	2.0703	1.6611	3.84	Accept	Within	295	368.7500	1.2500	39	Between	2	110.6447	55.3224	45.1552	3.84	Reject	Within	295	367.4224	1.2254	40	Between	2	199.4958	99.7479	80.0747	3.84	Reject
34	Between	2	78.9931	39.4963	32.2507	3.84	Reject																																																																																
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Table 2 shows that five items obtained f-calculated value greater than f-critical value and three obtained f-calculated value less than f-critical value. This implies that the null hypothesis was not accepted.



Discussion

The findings of the study revealed that all the database management functions studied were used by secretaries in the civil service of Anambra State. Agomuo (2005) noted that database management system is a collection of interrelated data and a set of programs to access those data. It is interesting to observe that secretaries in the civil service of Anambra State used the database management functions because database systems are designed to manage large bodies of information.

Results of the ANOVA analysis of the responses of secretaries showed that there was a significant difference in the mean responses of secretaries in Anambra State civil service based on the size of the organization. The implication is that the null hypothesis was not accepted. The finding was expected because all sizes of ministries do not manage the same quantity of records.

The findings agree with those of Maduabuchi (2012) who noted that the use of some competencies depend on the size and characteristic of a given business organization. The findings do not corroborate the views of Chukwuma (2006) who maintained that the size of the organization has no impact on the office records management skills and competences.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it is hereby recommended that:

1. The training institutions should ensure that they instruct trainee secretaries on the skills needed to manage electronic records effectively and efficiently in offices. This should also be incorporated into the office technology and management curriculum.
2. There is need for various forms of in-service training in the area of electronic records management in offices to equip secretaries with the skills needed to manage records.
3. Government should recognize the need for proper electronic records management skills and their benefits to the progress of any organization. Consequently, government has to provide considerable national resources both financially and otherwise to equip offices with requisite machines and equipment

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it is clear that secretaries were found to use all the database management functions studied. Database management systems help in the drastic reduction of paper-based filing systems in state of the art office. Education the world all over is today designed to fit more unto the electronic age for the purpose of efficiency. Database management systems allows for file sharing among all authorized



users who can use or work with the same file from different locations. Secretaries ought to keep abreast with these changes or be rendered obsolete.

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