



Property Records Management among Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms in Kaduna, Nigeria

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Abstract

The paper investigated property record management practices among Estate Surveying and Valuation firms with a view to identifying the most appropriate and contemporary means of keeping records among Valuation firms in Kaduna. The study adopted a quantitative approach in administering 70 questionnaires to Estate Surveying and Valuation firms. The research employed both descriptive and inferential statistical tools to analyze the data. The study explore into the types of records culture, the challenges associated with record keeping and the extent to which property records management affects real estate practice. It was found that 72% of Estate Surveying and Valuation firms utilize the manual method of record keeping, 28% adopt the digital method and 32% adopt both manual and digital methods of record keeping. Some challenges associated with property record management are ineffective means of retrieving information, insufficient space for records management, lack of adequate knowledge on how records are to be managed and client complexity. Good property records help protect necessary records, aids accountability and help preserve value. It was recommended that property record managers should be properly trained on how to manage records. Firms should also adopt the use of the electronic method of records keeping as well as develop the habit of updating on the current trend in property records keeping.

Keywords: *Digital record, Estate firms, Manual records, Record keeping, Kaduna, Nigeria*

Introduction

The ever-increasing volume of records being created and the rapidly rising cost of preserving these records necessitate

the use of productive property records management. The efficient use of information is critical to the smooth

operation of an organization. For any company to survive, progress, and continue to exist, records of previous issues, events, stories, and so on must be kept and maintained. A record is any type of information that is made, received, or even maintained by a person, institution, or organisation, independent of its physical form or features. It is viewed as an extension of human memory, with the purpose of recording information, documenting transactions, communicating ideas and substantiating claims, and providing advance explanations, justifications, and long-term evidence of events (Pearce & Baty, 2005). That is why humans have such a strong urge to produce, save, retrieve and send information to develop concrete connections with the rest of the world (Cox, 2001). The management of records from creation to disposal is the focus of property records keeping (Reed, 2005) because it is utilized in decision-making and legal aspects and protection, information is regarded as one of the most important aspects of any estate firm. Every business maintains property records critical to its day-to-day operations and its continued existence. In today's highly competitive workplace, during an emergency, a company must be able to keep records of its operations when it resumes essential and core business functions, and when it operates promptly, particularly after man-made or natural disasters. As a result, plans and actions must be put in place to secure the firm's ability to continue with commercial operations, as well as to assist them to establish their management and win their clients' faith and trust in their ability to save them in the event of a disaster (Verner, Sampson, Tosic, Bakar, & Kitchenham, 2009).

Some Nigerian business owners are still unaware of the significance and benefits of proper record keeping (Abayomi & Adegoke, 2016). Many businesses in Kaduna Metropolis are involved in property management. These businesses keep track of their property information through property records management, and the majority of these businesses still use the manual (paper) method of record keeping. Computerization has resulted in changes in the way businesses operate which are occurring at a rapid and dynamic pace. Property managers now deal with a considerably wider range of property records, both paper-based and electronic, than they did in the past. Even the methods of integrating and managing paper and electronic property records will change over time. The use of information and communication technology is changing the way businesses operate, and the introduction of computers can result in cost savings and added value to business operations. This places new demands on Kaduna metropolis property professionals to change how they handle property records management responsibilities. Despite the numerous advantages of electronic records management, the majority of businesses are progressively choosing not to create, save, or retrieve records electronically or use them in computerized form. Perhaps this is due to the firm's new and significant issues in managing electronic property records.

This study is exploratory to bridge the gap in the need for Estate Surveying and Valuation firms to shift from manual (paper-based) property records management to electronic (digitized) property records management to advance. The paper aims at investigating the

methods of record keeping by Estate Surveying and Valuation firms in Kaduna metropolis with a view to improving system of record keeping among professional practicing firms for efficient functioning of real estate business thereby meeting with the culture of best practices. The paper is structured into five sections. The first section introduces the motivation for the study. The second section reviews literature related to the work. The third section presents the research method employed. The fourth section presents the results and discusses the findings; while the fifth section summarises the findings and makes recommendations.

Literature Review

This section reviews related works covering property records administration, property record keeping types, maintaining manual records, keeping electronic records, advantages of property records management, and property records management's role in Real Estate practices.

Property records management according to Hodgson (2010), is the planning, managing, training, organizing, directing, and other managerial activities involved in records generation, maintenance, usage, and disposition to accomplish adequate and proper documentation of policies and transactions for practical and cost-effective agency management. Property records are created by Estate Surveying and Valuation firms to support the activities carried out. However, property records management is critical for all businesses, and without it, it is hard to do business, account for what has happened in the past, or make decisions in the future. Property records management is a database that contains information about the managed properties. Akporhor and Iwhiwhu (2007) asserted that managers, particularly chief executives benefit from data stored in paper and electronic files for leading, controlling, communicating, planning, developing policies, and making choices. The availability of records is critical in achieving a company's objectives. Perhaps more importantly, these property records must be managed appropriately. Property records must be recognized and appropriately managed to be of maximum value. Property records must be stored to be accessible and protected from environmental damage to ensure their safety and longevity. A typical paper document in an office may be kept in a filing cabinet. On the other hand, some businesses utilize climate-controlled file rooms with temperature and humidity control. Unegbu and Adenike (2013) are of the opinion that to protect against fire, flood, earthquake, and conflict, important documents must need to be kept in a disaster-proof safe or vault. They further maintained that disaster-proof storage equipment should be used in disaster-prone areas. This is determined by the imminent type of disaster in that area. An effective property records management program will ensure that records are available when needed, that privacy and confidentiality are maintained, that the fear of fire and theft is eliminated, that redundant records are destroyed, and that papers ultimately contribute to the firm's day-to-day operations.

It is not necessary to keep records in a precise format so long as they reflect a company's business, income, and outcome (Ademola, Samuel & Ifedolapo, 2012). Olatunji (2013) remarked that a firm's record system is a well-organized, efficient system for delivering accurate financial data and controls.

Weber (2011) categorized record-keeping into two (2) basic categories - manual and electronic records. Abayomi and Adegoke (2016) reported that manual records are the systematic and orderly recording of business transactions. They further opined that until the late Twentieth Century, the conventional and primary method of storing corporate records and other documents was through a paper-based record management system. That it is usually the procedures for preserving and archiving hard-copy documents. Although technological advancements according to Azman (2009) have driven many modern firms to adopt newer document management methods. Paper document management systems are still frequently employed in businesses today. While many small firms can continue to function on paper because of their size and the limited amount of records they may need to keep, other highly regulated industries like healthcare, law, or real estate may need to keep paper documents for legal compliance or to meet industry audit standards. When property records are created or received, the user must ensure that they are correctly filed and recorded so that they can be tracked and used by the organization in the future (Azman, 2009). However, on the other hand, Amanamah, Morrison, and Asiedu (2016) asserted that manual record-keeping is prone to errors and is vulnerable to harm one's business. They further maintained that manual record-keeping are negatively affected by water, fire, and other hazards. It was also reported that the amount of paper kept may be excessive, particularly in Nigeria, where clients can request for records of many years (Akande, 2016); therefore Electronic or digital record-keeping has been introduced because of this setback in manual record keeping. Akande also opined that Electronic record-keeping has the potential to alleviate the problem of manual record-keeping.

Oberg and Borglund (2012) discussed the importance of managing and maintaining property records for as long as necessary to ensure they meet the following criteria:

Authenticity – it may be proven that the property record is what it claims to be, that it was generated or sent by the person who claimed or have done so, and that it was created or sent at the time it claimed to have happened.

Reliability – because it is a comprehensive and accurate portrayal of the transaction(s) to which it attests, the property record can be relied on in later transactions.

Integrity – refers to the property record being complete, unaffected, and free of unlawful changes.

Usability – means that the property record can be found, retrieved, saved, and interpreted. Every company that uses electronic records keeping intends to accomplish one or more of the goals that electronic records keeping provides.

Richmond (2010) answers the question "Why Records Keeping?" in his paper by listing ten business reasons that should motivate them to keep records. According to Richmond, the importance of electronic records keeping includes the following: the preservation of

corporate memory, the facilitation of better management decision-making, the control of the generation and destruction of property records, the reduction of operational expenses, the enhancements of efficiency and productivity, and the implementation of new property records technologies, the removal of litigation risks, the safeguarding of essential information, and the promotion of professionalism in business operations. In addition, good property records management can ensure credibility. However, according to Sam, Hoshino, and Tashir (2012), small firms typically lack the financial resource, available time, and IT skilled personnel to make electronic record keeping a reality.

In the same vein, Ekwere (2005) holds that the accuracy of records management is critical to a company's success. To Sprehe (2005), the advantages of an efficient property records management system include: improved work support, in which necessary property records are arranged so that they are directly applicable to the work being done and unnecessary material is discarded; increased productivity, in which more time can be spent on the job rather than looking for files; and better use of office space, in which necessary filing equipment is reduced or better arranged. Also, access to critical information is improved (relevant property records are easier to identify and access), and paper duplication is reduced. In addition, identification of property records requiring special handling is reviewed or established, as are procedures for securing property records (Sprehe, 2005). Gold Group of Companies (2013) listed and explained some of the advantages of record management under the following headings:

Dependable information backups

Content is frequently not adequately backed up. We sometimes discover this after it is too late and the lost content. It is a legal requirement to make original and legible copies of property records and to have a solid backup solution for future use. This ensures that businesses will survive future disasters.

Increases security and control rates

Records management on paper is challenging in so many ways. Documents can be susceptible, so having adequate security and control over who has access to them is critical.

Allows for serious collaboration among businesses

Creating and implementing record workflows improves internal and external collaboration among firms. A records manager, for example, should be able to identify the location of a file at any given time.

Timelines have been improved

It saves time for them to be able to search for a file or document on their computer instead of going through a filing cabinet. Furthermore, because the records are electronic, they can be examined by several persons at the same time with ease.

Improved search capabilities

The ability to search for information in documents enables one to improve decision making and reduce the amount of time spent searching for information.

Task management has improved

When you digitize your information, you can assign tasks to users as needed. In addition, it improves workflow capabilities and allows you to document throughout your organization while still tracking their progress and subscribing to email notifications on their status.

Deforestation is minimized

When property records are saved electronically, there is a high reduction in the use of papers and as such, many trees are saved in the process hence a general minimization of deforestation (Gold Group of Companies, 2013)

Knowledge management, information management, and information technology are all essential because property records must be recognized as valuable and reusable assets, a source of content, context, and knowledge (Sutcliffe, 2003). Property records management has long been thought of as an information graveyard, a location where documents and records are stored for years. However, the landscape has shifted as a result of advancements in technology. The corporate record is transformed into the corporate memory, capable of informing and influencing everything done. According to Spratt (2004), there has been considerable concern about government and businesses' proper role and scope of the property records management function. And that property records management was synonymous with paperwork and paper management for a long time. As a result, the property records management function was regarded as a necessary evil in the background of a company's operations (Spratt, 2003). However, advances in computer and telecommunications technology have significantly influenced and shaped the role of property records management in a business.

Firms effectively integrate property records management with other information management functions within a firm. To acquire a competitive advantage, property records management becomes a strategic management role (De Wet and Du Toit, 2000). Interoperability between the property records management function and the IT function should be a key enabler given the rate at which property records are produced and disseminated electronically. In this regard, information technology is seen as enabling property records management to accomplish functions such as quick access, distribution, and cost reduction. To fulfill their strategic role, property records managers must be aware of the firm's objectives, associated legal and regulatory requirements, daily business practices, and information generation or use (De Wet and Du Toit, 2000).

Furthermore, Sutcliffe (2003) stressed the importance of integrating and coordinating property records management plans with content management, knowledge management, and Web publishing strategies. To support financial management and accountability, effective property records management systems are essential. As a result, property records management protects a firm's capacity to operate efficiently while also providing evidence for responsibility and transparency (Palmer, 2000).

Corruption has become a major cause of calls and strict accountability, therefore, internal regulation is linked to a more thorough and accurate record of decisions and actions. Property records serve as proof of regulatory compliance and property records management guidelines ensure that the evidence is captured and accessible (Palmer, 2000). Palmer is of the opinion that when there is corruption or a diversion of funds, property records should provide the evidence needed to prosecute the wrongdoers

successfully. And that good property records management has a deterrent effect, making it a more cost-effective preventative measure than prosecution. Property records management assists firms in exposing corruption and fraud when they occur within a firm (Palmer, 2000).

Property records, among other things, are used as raw materials for study in a variety of fields, including scientific research, which is an important part of socio-economic development. Property records can also be used as a source of information for strategic planning. As a result, property records management is crucial to the performance of both personnel (end users) and the firm. The basic of records management as previously stated is to promote the free flow of information within the firm. Property records management, above all, guarantees that a company's property records are safe for future reference (Porter, 2012). Martin (2006) holds that, in businesses, the benefit of property records management is becoming more frequently recognized. Property records managers must therefore ensure that they catch the attention of decision-makers in their organizations. Persuading management of the relevance of property records management as an enabler in an organization is the key to getting recognition.

Methodology

A literature review was conducted to identify a suitable and modern method of keeping records to investigate the record management culture among estate surveying and valuation firms in Kaduna Metropolis. This study's research design was survey research, which utilized quantitative data by administering questionnaires. The questionnaire was created with the study's objectives in mind. A questionnaire survey was used because it allows for collecting information from a large number of practitioners, which can then be analyzed statistically. In addition, the close ended questionnaire assisted respondents in providing relevant information for the study.

The study's population was made up of practicing Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms. The study used random sampling techniques, with questionnaires delivered directly to respondents and completed questionnaires retrieved after administration. A total of 70 questionnaires were distributed, with 59 returned.

The data were analyzed using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20.0, with mean scores and ranking as data analysis methods. Responses were graded on a 5-point Likert scale based on their perceived level of awareness. where SA = Strongly Agree 5, A = Agree 4, U = Undecided 3, D = Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree.

Results and Discussions

This section presents results and discusses results of the findings of the three study foci. The first focused on the firm's record culture, the second on the challenges associated with property records management in estate firms, and the third on how property records management affects real estate practice.

Table 1: The Types of Record Keeping Culture used by Firms

TYPE OF RECORD CULTURE	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL
Firm uses manual type of record-keeping	36 72%	-	-	-	14 28%	50 100%

Firm adopts the use of digital record keeping	14 28%	8 16%	-	2 4%	26 52%	50 100%
Firm uses both digital and manual record-keeping	16 32%	2 4%	-	6 12%	26 52%	50 100%
Firm has no record keeping	-	-	-	13 26%	37 74%	50 100%

Table 1 shows the results of a survey of Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms to determine the type of record culture they use. Record keeping is critical to the smooth operation of any estate management firm/organization. However, according to the results in table 1, many businesses (72%) strongly agree that they use the manual method of record keeping. This demonstrates that, despite technological advancements, most firms continue to use the crude form of keeping records; only a small percentage (28%) of respondents utilize digital means of record keeping. The majority of the businesses (74%) strongly disagreed that they do not keep records because the record is paramount and imperative in the smooth running of real estate business. The results perhaps give affair reflection of Nigerian Valuers level of IT inclination as significant number of firms do not keep records digitally but manually. It is worthy of note that no Estate and Surveying firm operates without record keeping either manually or digitally. This is a clear indication that it is near impossible to operate real estate business without proper record keeping culture.

Table 2: Challenges Associated with Property Record Management in Estate Firms.

CHALLENGES	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	RANKING
Lack of Up-to-date record of events	39 78%	11 22%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.78	5 th
Inadequate security/safety of records	40 80%	10 20%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.79	4 th
Inadequate professionally trained records managers	39 78%	11 22%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.77	7 th
Insufficient space for records management	41 82%	9 18%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.82	2 nd
Misplacement of vital information	39 78%	11 22%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.78	5 th
Ineffective means of retrieving information	42 84%	8 16%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.84	1 st
Lack of recent knowledge on how	43 86%	7 14%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.82	2 nd

records are to be managed								
Clients complexity	13 26%	37 74%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.26	10 th
Lack of accountability	26 52%	19 38%	-	3 6%	2 4%	50 100%	3.22	11 th
Difficulty in the day-to-day management of maintenance and maintenance culture	24 48%	26 52%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.48	9 th
Poor service delivery	33 66%	12 24%	-	5 10%	-	50 100%	3.73	8 th

Table 2 presents challenges associated with record keeping. Ineffective information retrieval method is ranked first with a Mean Score of 3.84; indicating that the difficulty of retrieving records is a challenge faced by most firms. Another challenge encountered with record-keeping is a lack of current knowledge on how records are managed, with a mean score of 3.82 and ranked second. Most firms that use manual record-keeping are unfamiliar with the current trend in digital record-keeping, which has become a challenge for them when it comes to keeping good records. Insufficient space for records management is another challenge that ranks second with the same mean score of 3.82. This is because most Estate Surveying Firms use the manual method of record-keeping, which necessitates a large amount of storage space. Another issue that most Estate Firms face is lack of current knowledge on managing records. Inadequate proper record security, which impacts management practices is ranked fifth with a mean score of 3.78. Misplacement of vital information is also ranked 5th with a mean score of 3.78. Security for records that affect records management practices is essential because they contain sensitive and critical information for the firms and the clients. Lack of accountability is the least -ranked challenge (11th) with a mean score of 3.22. The most common challenge faced by Estate Surveying and Valuation Firms in terms of record-keeping is ineffective way of retrieving information.

Table 3: Impact of Property Records Management on Real Estate Practice

EFFECT	SA	A	U	D	SD	TOTAL	MEAN	RANKING
Assist in accountability of firm's operation	41 82%	9 18%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.82	2 nd
Improves quality of property maintenance	39 78%	11 22%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.78	3 rd
Ensures safety of both client and firms' information	39 78%	11 22%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.78	3 rd
Provides shreds of evidence in the case of dispute resolution between parties	41 82%	9 18%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.82	2 nd
Greater transparency in business operations	33 66%	17 34%	-	-	-	50 100%	3.66	5 th
Assist in building national property data bank	34	16	-	-	-	50	3.68	4 th

Ensuring quality service	68%	32%				100%	3.78	3 rd
	39	11	-	-	-	50		
Protects necessary vital property information	78%	22%				100%	3.88	1 st
	44	6	-	-	-	50		
Preserves values Trend	88%	12%				100%	3.36	6 th
	18	32	-	-	-	50		
	36%	64%				100%		

Table 3 shows the impact of record keeping on Estate Surveying and Valuation practices. The result shows that record keeping impact most on real estate practice by ensuring vital property information are protected which ranks first with a Mean Score of 3.88. Adequate record keeping assists in providing accountability in firm's routine operations which ranks second with Mean Score of 3.82. Improving quality of property maintenance; ensures safety of both client and firms' information; and assisting in providing quality service rank third with Mean Score of 3.78 each. Preserving value trend ranks the least and sixth with a Mean Score of 3.36.

Summary and Conclusions

The study's findings demonstrate the importance of property records management to a firm's competitive performance. Those who manage, keep and use property records wisely benefit from compotator and survive in the global environment. Moreover, property records in firms must be handled properly because they provide verifiable evidence when parties disagree and can lead the investigator to the root cause of the dispute. This is because sound property records management is thus at the heart of increased accountability; it is one of the most powerful tools in the fight against corruption. It also aids in the maintenance of solid financial management. Property records, like other corporate resources like cash and staff, should thus be managed in the same way.

Furthermore, the debate has revealed that electronic property records management is not a choice but rather a requirement because firms regulate it. As a result, advocating for electronic property records management as a societal organizational advantage is not a task to be taken lightly. Property records management ignorance can harm a firm's performance, deplete financial resources, and impede service delivery. Another unpopular opinion is that the shift from paper to electronic reduces the amount of paper consumed, saving trees and controlling deforestation, therefore improving our climate.

The paper recommends that property records management should be a priority to Estate Surveying and Valuation firms and documents be kept confidentially and be safeguarded for future use in a most secured manner. It is imperative for property records management to be managed by professionals who understand what needs to be done and how records are managed. To qualify for property records management, firms must adequately train their property records management staff on everything about records in estate firms. Firms should use the electronic method of property record-keeping rather than relying on the manual way of property record keeping as it has more advantages over the manual mode and helps create a smooth working process in estate firms; Finally, firms should be updated on the current trend in electronic property records keeping as it helps in being updated on the better and advanced ways of keeping property records thereby eliminating every form of difficulty encountered in property records management in every estate firm.

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