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Evaluating the Use of University Libraries in Nigeria: A Case Study of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike

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Introduction

Evaluating the use of library and information system is one of the major concerns and an integral part of library and information science practitioners. It is easily recognized as an important issue, although it has been looked at or defined variously. Scrivener (1967) sees evaluation as, "an attempt to answer certain types of questions about certain entities," while Fjallbrant (1977) defines evaluation as "the collection of information about the effect of an educational course or programme, often involving the comparison of observed effects with expectations or intentions." These definitions may be outdated, and not helpful in the current environment. Rowantee (1982) sees evaluation as "the means whereby we systematically collect and analyze information about students' encounter with learning experience. This is done after setting aims and objectives, selecting and organizing the content, methods and media." Obioma (1986) defines evaluation as "the quantitative judgment resulting from assessment; that is, a value judgment on quantitative data arising from testing and measurement." In a library, evaluation is the process whereby we systematically collect and analyze information about students' encounter with the library system, by using evidence (testing), assigning numerical values to the evidence (measurement), and using the results to make decisions (assessment). The purpose of evaluation, according to Knightly (1979), is to gather information on how the library is accomplishing its objectives, with a view to improving the delivery of library services. One of the ways of testing, measuring and assessing (evaluation) the effectiveness of a library system is through research.

The five laws of library science formulated by Ranganathan (1931) are designed to provide the right materials to meet the information needs of the library users. That can only happen when the library system is regularly evaluated. One logical means of evaluation is seeking the opinions of users (Altman and Hernon, 1998). The era when university libraries assumed that they were providing excellent service is over. Dwindling resources and increased enrolment demand that periodic evaluation be done.

Literature Review

Iruoje (1995) discusses the difficulties underlying efforts to measure and evaluate library services based on use. Iruoje discusses library services that can be evaluated: catalogue use, reference service, journal use, and retrieval systems. She argues that evaluating services based

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on use is difficult, that the varied services provided by libraries must be evaluated independently, and that evaluation must be tailored to library type, collections, and users.

Kebede (1999) outlines the nature and purpose of library evaluation, and further delineates the situation of developing countries, pinpointing specific issues that can be addressed. The article identifies the following stumbling blocks: lack of awareness, cost of conducting the evaluation, shortage of staff, and lack of methods and tools to employ for the purpose.

Osinulu (1998) examines patterns of use in a university library in Nigeria by analyzing user records and data, which show low use of library services because of lack of awareness. The author recommends library reference and instruction, publication of users' guides, and teaching library use in the general studies programme. Adelani (1998) investigates how the effective use of the library by education students. He was able to determine the impact of library orientation on their use of library, frequency of visits, purpose and problems in the use of library. Findings showed that a majority of the students lacked appreciation of the importance of the library.

Ampka's (2000) study of the use of University of Maiduguri Library found that a majority of students did not use the library effectively because they sis not use the library catalogues. Okiy (2000) assesses student and faculty use of academic libraries in Nigeria with particular reference to Delta State University , Abraka. She found that respondents used books more than other reading materials and that they tended to find materials by browsing the shelves. Similar studies were conducted by Gbadamosi (2003) on catalogue use; Akande (2003) on the pattern of use of University of Ibadan library; and Osinulu and Balogun (2003) on the effectiveness of reference service to faculty members.

Oyesiku and Oduwole (2004) focus on academic library use. The investigation revealed that the students used the library most during examinations and to do class assignments. The study further revealed that collections were inadequate to meet users demands, even when 84.3% of users are not trained in information retrieval. The study recommends various strategies to market library facilities and services. Oyedum (2005) remedial students' use of library resources and of a university of technology. She discovered that students went to the library primarily to read their lecture notes and study for examinations, that the sources most frequently used were textbooks, and that majority of the students "never" borrowed library books.

Michael Okpara University of Agriculture

The University, which began with six Colleges and a School of General Studies in the 1993/94 academic year (Annual Report) is located at Umudike, Ikwuano Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria. It is located near institutions as Government College Umudike, Abia State University, Umudike Campus, and the National Root Crop Research Institute (NRCRI) Umudike. On May 27, 1994, one year from the date of appointment of key officers and the Governing Council, the University opened its doors to its first set of students. Its first matriculation took place in August 1994. In addition to many undergraduate programmes, the university set up a postgraduate school in January 1997.

In addition to the traditional tripartite mission of universities - teaching, research, and community service, the University of Agriculture Umudike has adopted "training" as a fourth mission, to ensure that its products can go from "Lab to Land." The University commits it self to the production of educated farmers, the conduct of multi-disciplinary and relevant organized research, and the systematic propagation of new and improved agricultural protocols.

University Library

The University Librarian is in charge of library administration and reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor. There is also a library committee. There are four major divisions in the library: Collection Development, Technical Services, Documents and Serials, and Readers Services.

The library has about 20,000 volumes covering all aspects of agricultural science and allied fields; 5,000 volumes of reference materials, including dictionaries, encyclopedias, directories, and research reports of student research projects, including theses and dissertations. The university has the 2005 version of the Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL). TEEAL is a collection of 130 major agricultural journals, contained in 426 CD-ROMs. The library is connected to the Internet, and subscribes to more than 500 print journal titles, local and foreign, as well as national newspapers and magazines. The library has a seating capacity for only 148 readers. There are six computers in the library. Other equipment includes overhead projectors, display screen, and public address system.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to assess students and staff use of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Library, Umudike. The specific objectives are to:

- examine frequency of use
- investigate reasons for using the library
- determine which reading materials were used most
- examine how users locate materials
- assess the availability of material
- determine which kinds of material users need assistance to find
- assess the helpfulness of library staff
- seek user opinion on library services and facilities.

Research Methods

This is a case study. The population is 1000 registered library users, of which 160 samples were selected, using a proportionate stratified sampling technique. The main instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was brief and structured. Respondents were given time and opportunity to complete the questionnaire in the library. 154 copies of the questionnaire were properly completed and returned. During analysis, frequencies were computed from the responses to the questions and converted to percentages as presented and analyzed as follows.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Status of the Respondents

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents by Status

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Student	134	87
Staff	20	13
Total	154	100

134 (87%) of respondents were students, while 20 (13%) were staff. Students constitute the majority in the university community.

Frequency of the Use of Library

Table 2 Distributions of Respondents by their Frequency of Use of Library

Period	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	56	36.4
2-3 times a week	74	48.1
Once a week	11	7.1
2-3 Monthly	9	5.8
Once a month	4	2.6
Total	154	100

A m ajority of respondents, 74 (48.1%) used the library 2-3 times a week, while 56 (36.4%) used the library daily. Only 4 (2.6%) used the library once a month.

Reasons for Using the Library

Table 3 Distributions by Reasons for Using the Library

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
a. To borrow library books	10	6.5
b. Read library books	50	32.5
c. Consult Reference Materials	42	27.3
d. Read Newspapers/magazines	9	5.9
e. Do class assignment	20	13
f. All of the above	4	2.6
g. a, b, d, and e	2	1.3
h. b, c, d, and e	2	1.3
i. a and c	1	0.7
j. b and c	4	2.6
k. a, d, and d	1	0.7
l. a, b, and c	2	1.3
m. a, b, c, and e	4	2.6
n. c and e	1	0.70
o. a and e	1	0.70
p. b and d	1	0.70
Total	154	100

50 (32.5%) came to the library to read library books, 42 (27.3%) used the library to consult reference materials, 20 (13%) to do class assignment and 10 (6.5%) to borrow library books. Only 4 (2.6%) came to use the library for all stated reasons, while another 4 (2.6%) came to the library to read library books and consult reference materials.

Reading Materials Used Most

Table 4 Distributions by Reading Materials Used Most

Materials	Frequency	Percentage

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a. Text Books		98	63.6
b. Reference Materials		25	16.2
c. Journals/Indexes		4	2.6
d. Project Reports		3	1.9
e. Newspapers/Magazines		11	7.2
f. All of the above		2	1.3
g. Books and Journals/Indexes		1	0.7
h. Books, Reference Materials and Project Reports		2	1.3
I. Books/Newspapers/Magazines		2	1.3
j. Books and Reference Materials		4	2.6
k. Books and Project Reports		1	0.7
Total		154	100

Text books account for most library visits, with 98 (63.6%), reference materials accounted for 25 (16.2%), newspapers/magazines 11(7.2%), journal/indexes 4 (2.6%) and project reports 3 (1.9%).

Means of Locating Reading Materials

Table 5 Distributions of Respondents by Means of Locating Material

Means	Frequency	Percentage
a. Shelves	113	73.4
b. Card catalogues	8	5.2
c. Library staff	18	11.2
d. Other means	6	4.9
e. All of the above	2	1.3
f. a, c, d	1	0.65
g. a, c	3	2.6
h. b, c	1	0.65
i. a, d	1	0.65
j. a, b, c	1	0.65
Total	154	100

113 (73.4%) of the users locate material through the shelves, while 18 (11.2%) consult library staff. Only 8 (5.2%) locate materials using the card catalogues.

Availability of Material

Table 6 Users' Responses on Availability of Reading Materials

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
a. Always	24	15.6
b. Sometimes	129	83.8
c. Never	1	0.65
Total	154	100

129 (83.8%) of users "sometimes" found materials available, while 24 (15.6%) "always" found them available. Only 1 (.65%) never found the materials available.

Need for Assistance in Locating Material

Table 7 Distribution of Responses by Types of Materials Users Need Assistance to Find

Area	Frequency	Percentage
a. Text Books	43	27.9
b. Reference Materials	55	35.7
c. Journals/Indexes	19	12.3
d. Project Reports	19	12.3
e. Newspapers/Magazines	12	7.8
f. Text Books/Reference Materials	4	2.6
g. None of the above	2	1.3
Total	154	100

55 (35.7%) of respondents needed assistance in locating reference materials, 43 (27.9%) needed help in locating text books, 19 (12.3%) needed assistance in locating journals/indexes and project reports each, and 12 (7.8%) needed help in locating newspaper/magazines.

Staff Cooperation

Table 8 Users' Response on staff Cooperation

Response	Frequencies	Percentage
a. Always	84	54.5
b. Sometimes	57	37.0
c. Not cooperative	5	3.2
d. No opinion	8	5.3
Total	154	100

84 (54.5%) of the respondents "always" got staff cooperation, 57 (37.0%) "sometimes" got staff cooperation, while 5 (3.2%) found that staff never cooperated, and 8 (5.3%) had no opinion.

Users' Opinion on the library services and facilities

Table 9 Users' Responses on Library services and facilities

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
a. Very good	7	4.5
b. Good	40	26.0
c. Fair	78	50.6
d. Poor	18	11.7
e. Very poor	11	7.1
Total	154	100

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The largest number of respondents, 78 (50.6%), rated services and facilities as "fair", while 40 (26.0%) rated them "good", and 18 (11.7%) rated the services and facilities as "poor."

Discussion of Findings

Both the students and the staff use the library, although students constitute the majority of the users as shown in Table 1. Most respondents use the library 2-3 times a week or daily (Table 2), a good indication of library use. Many reasons were advanced for using the library (Table 3). The largest number of respondents, 50 (32.6%), came to read books from the collection, while 42 (27.3%) came to consult reference materials. This shows that resources are used, even though 20 (13%) came to the library to do course assignments. Textbooks are the most frequently-used materials with 98 (63.6%), followed by reference materials at 25(16.2%) (Table 4).

Nearly three quarters (113, 73.4%) of users indicate that they go directly to the shelves to locate material, and 18 (11.7%) ask the library staff. Only 8 (5.2%) use the card catalogue. This low rate of catalogue use casts doubt on whether the library's collections are being fully used. This doubt was confirmed by 129 (83.8%) of respondents who claimed that "sometimes" reading materials were available (Table 6), and was further confirmed when 55 (35.7%) and 43 (27.9%) said they needed assistance in locating materials (Table 7).

More than half of respondents (84, 54.5%) said that they always receive staff cooperation, while 57 (37.0%) "sometimes" receive it (Table 8). That may explain why users rely more on library staff than on the card catalogue in locating reading materials. While this commendable, users should learn to use the catalogue. Half of users (78, 50.6%) rated library services and facilities as "fair", 40 (26.0%) rated them "good," 7 (4.5%) as "very good." "Poor" and "very poor" were chosen by 11 (7.1%) and 18 (11.7%) users, respectively.

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