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Assessing Library Services in Meeting Users' Information Needs in Universities in Benue State Rating Scale

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Abstract

This paper examines assessing Library Services in Meeting Users' Information Needs in Universities in Benue State Rating Scale. The paper adopts survey research. The population of the study was 10,000 library users and one librarian This population consisted of 4,286 (library users) and 1 librarian from the University of Agriculture, Makurdi; 5,520 library users and 1 librarian from Benue State University, Makurdi; and 191 library users and 1 librarian from University of Mkar, Mkar. The library users were made up of only registered 400-Level student users of the concerned libraries. The paper used a sample size of 370 library users which comprises of 367 students and 3 librarians. Findings from the study reveals that university libraries to a great extent are providing services that meet users' information needs. Acquisition and classification services were reportedly provided to a great extent by university library in Benue State. This finding suggests that university libraries in Benue State provided these services adequately enough to meet information needs of users. The findings on the extent to which acquisition services in particular meets information needs of users presented a mixed picture. For example, while acquisition meet information needs of users to a great extent in terms of journal, e-encyclopedia, and e-database, others such as e-books, e-journals, CD-Rom

and textbooks presented a negative picture. Thus, indicating that acquisition services satisfactorily meet information needs of users even as result indicated that it was provided at a great extent. Finding of this study showed that classification service satisfactorily meet information needs of the users. However, classification mark was able to link users where to locate related materials on the shelf and also enabled users to know how materials are arranged on the shelves to a great extent. The paper also made some recommendations such as University libraries in Benue State should enhance the acquisition services. This may be through acquisition of current information resources. University libraries in Benue State should re-architecture the classifications service. This may be in terms of acquiring state of art classification tools and training staff on the use of tools.

Key Words: Accessing, Library services, Users, Information Needs and Rating Scale.

Introduction

Conceptually and universally, an academic library is considered as a service institution established by or attached to a higher educational institution for the principal purpose of serving the learning, teaching and research needs of students and staff, and indeed the institution's community. Libraries are established in universities in order to provide critical information resources or infrastructure that is necessarily indispensable for effective teaching, learning and research in the parent institution. This critical role of the library has been eloquently emphasized that "the library is the heart beat of the university and serves as the educational life wire of every serious user" (UAM:nd).

The university libraries intend to achieve their ambitious institutional policy of being dependable and reliable information resource reservoirs through provision of effective high quality library facilities and services that meet the needs of the university community. They engage in identification of the peculiar students' and college needs; provision of conducive physical environment for study and work; acquisition and deployment of modern information and communication technologies for the purpose of providing electronic information resources; and the provision of appropriate modern technology and infrastructural framework for operational efficiency and effectiveness (UAM: nd).

In other words, the main objective of the university libraries can be achieved if they provide necessary facilities and services to the users to attain proficiency in the fields of their specialization and to assimilate general knowledge (Mittal, 2007). These libraries, therefore, according to Saharan (2013), serve two complementary purposes of supporting the school's curriculum, and the research of the university faculty and students, which Vijeyaluxmy (2015) further explains, can be achieved by providing relevant and useful resources in the form of books, services and electronic resources. Library collections must be relevant to the information needs of users (Harbo and Hansen, 2012) and the absence of accompanying access tools, instructions or other library services renders such collections as mere warehouse, not libraries (Saharan, 2013). It therefore, means that in pursuit of the cardinal objective of providing teaching, learning and research support services, academic libraries undertake or put in place certain institutional services or mechanisms which may simply be recognized as being synonymous with facilities, and services rendered as well as policies in an attempt to satisfy users' information needs.

A plethora of research studies and works have identified such services to include the following services; acquisition, reference, classification, cataloguing, circulation, inter library co-operation, inter-library loan services, current awareness services, user education, internet services, indexing and abstracting services, (Uganneya Terna, Abah and Ape, 2013; Uganneya and Agoh, 2013; Igwe and Onah and Uzuegbu, 2013; Mittal, 2007).

The needs of users of university libraries are generally defined and configured by the contextual prescriptions of the curricular dimensions of the various courses offered by a particular university. These needs, as determined by many researchers, are dynamic and easily influenced by the dictates of modernity and emerging competitive nature of the education industry.

University libraries, like others, are under enduring obligations of showing value for their existence in order to attract funding from sponsors and donor agencies as well as meet the demands for accountability and quality service delivery (Saharan, 2013; Peterson Gijbers and Wilks, 2003). Uganneya Terna, Abah and Ape (2013) in a limited assessment of library services in Universities of Agriculture in Nigeria, express their concern that to regain or maintain credibility and attract a level of funding that allows them make expected relevance and quality of service delivery; University of Agriculture libraries must show willingness to improve and adapt. The crucial question, therefore, is whether these university libraries are performing, and are necessarily doing so effectively in order to meet the needs of the users and satisfy the expectations of all relevant stakeholders.

The performance of university libraries underscores the institutional question of efficient resources utilization towards policy objectives and goal as well as output relevance to consumer needs. Peterson Gijbers and Wilks (2003) define organizational performance as the ability of an organization to use its resources efficiently, and produce outputs that are consistent with its objectives and relevant for its users. For a university library, organizational performance refers to the ability to provide information resources and services that are relevant and meet the information needs of the respective university library users.

There seems to be a smoldering lack of consensus by researchers as to the most appropriate method of assessment of library performance or quality of service delivery. Assessment of academic library programs has taken on, among a plethora of services, a new dimension with the concept of outcomes assessment which, Kirk in Onwuchekwa (2013) observes has been promoted by the regional accrediting agencies, and doubting its efficacy, concluded in his work that “they have been less successful in assessing outcomes.

In justifying the use of outcomes assessment in determination of service quality, Parasuraman, Zeithmanland Berry as cited in Woo (2016) professed that service quality is an abstract and elusive construct because of three features unique to services; intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability of production and consumption, and they concluded that in absence of objective measures, an appropriate services for assessing the quality of a firm's service is to measure consumers' perception of quality. Also, Griffiths Johnson, and Hartley (2007) stated that user satisfaction is a perceptual and subjective measure of library and information system effectiveness. Uganneya Terna, Abah and Ape (2013) have also justified the choice of user satisfaction services in assessment of library's institutional services in meeting the information needs of its users upon the philosophical premise that "user satisfaction is a surrogate for effective system service delivery."

It is, therefore, the assumed responsibility of these libraries not only to provide better services to their users but to also ensure that information services, and resources are well utilized for the benefit of the users. It is only upon the fulfillment of this cardinal responsibility that the academic library may be held to have through instituted mechanisms met the needs of its users.

Good as that may be, and as earlier highlighted, the libraries of University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Benue State University and University of Mkar, Mkar are similarly not immuned from the challenges of underfunding and/or belated release of funds, inadequate or decaying infrastructure, unskilled manpower, inefficient utilization of information resources by library users, inadequate information resources acquisition to meet the enhanced users' needs profile, among others. Therefore, this study will examine the nature of services provided by the respective university libraries for the ultimate purpose of satisfying users' needs. The study will

also determine the extent to which their users are satisfied with such services delivered given the several constraining circumstances.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the establishment of any library, university library inclusive, will only be achieved through the undertaking of appropriate institutional mechanisms or processes which effectuate the delivery of services that satisfy the peculiar needs of its users. This is because, it is by way of such corporate services that information resources are acquired, processed and accumulated, access is enabled, and services that are satisfying are rendered. There is, however, palpable sense of uncertainty concerning the golden issue of whether or not the materials and services provided by the university libraries are meeting the information needs of users. This anxiety is rooted in the current challenges facing the university libraries, namely; dwindling budgetary allocations resulting to insufficiency of funds for implementation of library projects and services; rapid changes in patterns of users' needs, and expansion of curricular contents of universities to meet challenges of globalization and labour demands. Added to this is the explosion of information resources, large population of persons without basic library and information science education background are being employed as librarian to work in the university libraries, and challenges of effective management and transparency.

From the foregoing scenario, there is therefore, the urgent need to undertake a comprehensive assessment of these libraries in order to answer the question of whether or not these libraries have been, and are still, effectively delivering quality services to their users. Believably and unarguably, the afore-mentioned circumstances seem to disclose probable strains of institutional weakness capable of affecting tangibly the quality and relevance of service in terms of satisfaction of users' needs and priorities. From practical standpoint and knowledge too, the

researcher has observed users' general apathy to the use of the library and its existing resources as indicated, a situation that poses a legion of questions which only a comprehensive assessment of this sort will ultimately answer.

A survey of existing literature shows that comprehensive assessment of library programs or services have been carried out in some developed countries as well as other developing countries including Nigeria. This study is unique in the sense that it is comprehensive not only in terms of magnitude of library services assessed but also broadness of constituency of library stakeholders involved. No similar study has been done in the area of this present study to the best of the knowledge of the researcher. Hence, the study is to determine assessing Library Services in Meeting Users' Information Needs in Universities in Benue State Rating Scale of Nigeria with the aim of isolating weaknesses and strengths in the library system as they affect users' satisfaction.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was assessing Library Services in Meeting Users' Information Needs in Universities in Benue State Rating Scale of Nigeria. Hence, the specific objectives of this study were to;

1. Determine the availability of library services towards meeting users' information needs in universities in Benue State.
2. Ascertain the extent to which acquisition services meets the information needs of users in universities in Benue State.
3. Ascertain the extent to which classification services meet the information needs of users in universities in Benue State.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent are library services available in meeting the information needs of users in universities in Benue State?
2. To what extent do acquisition services meet the information needs of library users in universities in Benue State?
3. To what extent do classification services meet the information needs of university library users in Benue State?

Statement of Hypotheses

The following hypotheses are formulated by the researcher for the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

1. Acquisition services do not significantly meet information needs of users of university libraries in Benue State.
2. Classification services do not significantly meet information needs of users of university libraries in Benue State.

Methodology

The survey research was used for the study. The study area is Benue State which is located in North Central of Nigeria with a population of about 4, 353, 641 (2006 Census). The population of this study was made up of 10,000 respondents. This population consisted of 4,286 (library users) and 1 librarian from the University of Agriculture, Makurdi; 5,520 library users and 1 librarian from Benue State University, Makurdi; and 191 library users and 1 librarian from University of Mkar, Mkar. The library users were made up of only registered 400-Level student users of the concerned libraries. The researcher used a sample size of 370 respondents which

comprises of 367 students and 3 librarians. This sample size was determined from Krejcie and Morgan’s table for determining sample size. Multi-stage sampling technique was used for the study. The study adopted the use of a rating scale in order to measure the perception of library users in the universities under study. The instrument for data collection was named “Assessing Library Services in Meeting Users’ Information Needs in Universities in Benue State Rating Scale” (ALSMUINRS). The instrument was face and content validated by three experts; two from the Department of Library and Information Science and one from Test and Measurement in the Department of Educational Foundations, all of Benue State University, Makurdi. The overall reliability coefficient of the instrument was calculated and the result was found to be .927.

Three research assistants, one from each university, were selected and trained on the mode of administration of the instrument on the respondents. Direct administration by researcher and research assistants was used and this ensured speedy and high return rate of the completed copies of the rating scale. The data collected was presented in tabular form, from which percentages, frequencies, the mean and standard deviation using the weighted responses rating of 4, 3, 2, and 1 providing the average mean= $4+3+2+1= 10/4= 2.50$, the researcher considered the average mean of 2.50 and above as acceptable, and that below 2.50 as not acceptable. The hypotheses were tested using Chi-Square statistic at 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussions

Research Questions One: To what extent are library services available for meeting the information needs of users in Universities in Benue State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation showing Extent to which Library Services are Available in Meeting Information Needs of Users

S/N	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
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1	Acquisition	3.67	.57	Very Great Extent
2	Catalogue	3.33	1.15	Very Great Extent
3	Classification	3.33	1.15	Very Great Extent
4	Circulation	3.00	1.00	Very Great Extent
	Grand Mean	3.33	.96	Very Great Extent

Data presented in table 1 revealed that item 1 has mean of 3.67 and SD of .57, item 2 has a mean of 3.33 and SD 1.15, item 3 has 3.33and SD of 1.15, item 4 has a mean of 3.00 and SD of 1.00 respectively. The grand mean of 3.33 and SD of 0.96 indicates that to a great extent,the library services are available in meeting users' information need in University libraries in Benue State.

Research Questions Two: To what extent does acquisition approach meet the information needs of library users in universities in Benue State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation showing Extent of Availability of Acquisition Services for Meeting Information Needs of Users

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1	Textbooks	2.92	1.04	Great Extent
2	Journals	2.97	1.13	Great Extent
3	E-Books	2.80	1.24	Great Extent
4	E-Journals	3.01	0.96	Great Extent
5	E-Encyclopedia	2.88	1.04	Great Extent
6	E-Data base	2.61	1.27	Great Extent
7	CD Rom	2.48	1.34	Low Extent
	Grand Mean	2.81	1.14	Great Extent

Data presented in table 2 revealed the mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (S.D) of items on the extent of availability of acquisition services for meeting information; item No 4 has the highest $\bar{X} = 3.01$ and S.D = 0.96 followed by item No 2 $\bar{X} = 2.97$ and S.D of 1.13, Item No 1 has $\bar{X} = 2.92$ and S.D = 1.04 while No. 5 has $\bar{X} = 2.88$ and S.D = 1.04 and Item No 3 has $\bar{X} = 2.80$ and S.D = 1.24 Also item No. 6 which has a of $\bar{X} = 2.61$ with S.D = 1.27. Item No 7 which has least $\bar{X} = 2.48$ and S.D = 1.34. The Grand Cluster $\bar{X} = 2.81$ and S.D = 1.14, indicating high extent of availability of acquisition services for meeting information

Research Questions Three: To what extent do classification services meet the information needs of university library users in Benue State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Extent of Classification Services Available in Meeting Information Needs of Users

S/N	Item	Mean	Std. Deviation	Decision
1	I use classification mark to locate information resources on the shelf easily	2.71	.99	Great Extent
2	I use cross reference (links) marks to locate related library materials easily	2.78	1.05	Great Extent
3	I use classification marks to know how books are arranged on the shelves	3.01	1.21	Very Great Extent
	Grand Mean	2.83	1.08	Great Extent

Data presented in table 3 revealed that item 1 has mean of 2.71 and SD of .99, item 2 has a mean of 2.78 and SD 1.05, item 3 has 3.01 and SD 1.21, respectively. With a grand mean of 3.47 and SD of 0.53, the result shows that, cataloguing services meet the information needs of university library users in Benue State.

Hypothesis One: Acquisition services do not significantly meet information needs of users of University libraries in Benue State.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis on how Acquisition Services meet Information Needs of University Library Users

	Df	P	Sig level	Decision
Chi-square	11			
		0.00	0.05	Rejected
No valid Cases				P<0.05

Data presented in table 4 showed that the P-value of 0.00 is less than alpha-value of 0.05 (P<0.05) at df = 11, and this implies that the test is significant. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that Acquisition services do not significantly meet information needs of users of University libraries is rejected.

Hypothesis Two: Classification services do not significantly meet information needs of users of University libraries in Benue State

Table 6: Chi-Square Analysis on how Classification Services meet Information Needs of Users of University Libraries in Benue State

	Df	P	Sig level	Decision
Chi-square	6			

	0.00	0.05	Rejected
No valid Cases			P<0.05

Data presented in table 8 showed that the P-value of 0.00 is less than alpha-value of 0.05 (P<0.05) at df 6, and this implies that the test is significant. Therefore the null hypothesis which states that Classification services do not significantly meet information needs of users of University libraries in Benue State is rejected

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study reveals that university libraries to a great extent are providing services that meet users' information needs. Acquisition and classification services were reportedly provided to a great extent by university library in Benue State. This finding suggests that university libraries in Benue State provided these services adequately enough to meet information needs of users. This finding is in agreement with that of Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) who reported that African University libraries have been seen to have provided adequate classification and acquisition services in order to acquire catalogue and put-on-shelf those information resources for easy identification, location and retrieval. The agreement of the findings of the study with this previous study would suggest that university libraries in Africa are known to have been consistently providing acquisition, classification, cataloguing and circulation services and the case was not different with the university libraries in Benue State.

The findings on the extent to which acquisition services in particular meets information needs of users presented a mixed picture. For example, while acquisition meet information needs of users to a great extent in terms of journal, e-encyclopedia, and e-database, others such as e-books, e-journals, CD-Rom and textbooks presented a negative picture. Thus, indicating that acquisition

services satisfactorily meet information needs of users even as result indicated that it was provided at a great extent.

This could suggest that the university libraries in this study used acquisition services to access specific information resources such as journals, e-encyclopedia and e-database. These resources interestingly may look more comprehensive and encyclopedia enough to cover major subjects studied in the university. This finding of this study is partly in agreement with that of Mittal (2007) who reported that book selection committee is made up of departments and the library and is supposed to acquire a balance collection for the university, in most cases, book selection and acquisition exercises are supposed to ensure that materials that are of low standard and low demanded are excluded from acquisition list.

Furthermore, finding of this study showed that classification service satisfactorily meet information needs of the users. However, classification mark was able to link users where to locate related materials on the shelf and also enabled users to know how materials are arranged on the shelves to a great extent. The fact that classification did satisfactorily meet information need of users could be that staffs responsible for classification do have skill adequately enough to identify and place classification marks on the books. This finding is almost in agreement with Aguolu and Aguolu (2007) who reported that in both developed and developing countries scholars have been critical of classified scheme as arbitrary and logical in many instances. This suggested that universal applicability of classification scheme may not suite all conditions at all times in all places. Therefore local fits are necessary.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that acquisition and classification services to a great extent meet information's needs of libraries user in Benue State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made: University libraries in Benue State should enhance the acquisition services. This may be through acquisition of current information resources. University libraries in Benue State should re-architecture the classifications service. This may be in terms of acquiring state of art classification tools and training staff on the use of tools.

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