

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)

Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

November 2022

Library User Education Programme: A Panacea for Effective Library Resources Utilization in Nigerian Universities

Peter Olubunmi Olubiyo

Adeyemi College Education, Ondo, olubiyopeter@gmail.com

Lydia Mercy Olubiyo

Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja, Nigeria, olubiyomercy@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac>



Part of the [Scholarly Communication Commons](#)

Olubiyo, Peter Olubunmi and Olubiyo, Lydia Mercy, "Library User Education Programme: A Panacea for Effective Library Resources Utilization in Nigerian Universities" (2022). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 7437.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/7437>

Library User Education Programme: A Panacea for Effective Library Resources Utilization in Nigerian Universities

Peter Olubunmi Olubiyo,
Cataloguing and Classification Section,
Adeyemi College Education, Ondo, Nigeria
olubiyopeter@gmail.com
+2348166392038

And

Lydia Mercy Olubiyo,
Department of Library and Information Science
Kogi State Polytechnic, Lokoja, Nigeria,
olubiyomercy@gmail.com
+2349063762872

Abstract

User education programme refers to a well-planned programme of training and educating patrons on the skills and techniques of locating and retrieving library materials. User education is one of the important services of the library organized each year for undergraduates of higher institutions. User education is an academic programme designed by academic libraries to educate her user's especially undergraduates on how to effectively utilize library resources and services. The researchers explained that user education quickens the efforts of the clientele in retrieving and aids utilization of library materials through user education. More importantly, whether information comes from the internet, or the World Wide Web, Online databases, books or document, and other possible sources, users need user education for effective usage of information resources. And this prompted the various methods used for user education in Nigerian University Libraries such as library tour, library orientation, orientation lectures, library instruction, individual instruction, and class instruction to teach library literacy instructions. Users should expect timely access to quality information. This information must be accurate, relevant, comprehensive, and engaging. This can be done successfully by incorporating user education and training components into the academic library programmes and developing continuing professional education and training for the library and information professionals, as well as the end-users who will have to develop learning attitude and network related competence by the use information and communication technologies. This informed university authorities' decision to make frantic efforts to teach university students library literacy skills through formal library instruction programmes.

Key Words: Library User Education, Library Resources, Nigerian Universities

Introduction

Library is the live wire of academic institutions because it provides the atmosphere and materials conducive and necessary for learning, teaching and research. In any academic environment, learning, teaching and research are the integral activities done in the existence of information in the library. It is therefore clear that library has a role to play in the development of education of its users for national development (Fliss, 1999).

Academic libraries are essential contributors to knowledge generation to serve a wide spectrum of knowledge seekers. In fact, academic libraries have been described as the heart of the university, because they provide a place for students and faculty to do their research and advance their knowledge. Thus, the fundamental role of any academic library is to collect, process, store, and disseminate information to provide services to the academic and research community (Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey and Frempong, n.d). Information is now considered as the fifth factor of production because it is needed in all stages of human development. People need information to learn new skills and also to satisfy their course/academic demands. One primary objective of any library is to maximize the intensive use of its information resources and services. Library materials are acquired to be used adequately in order to justify the huge amount of money invested in such resources(Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey and Frempong, n.d).

The effectiveness of an academic library as an instrument of learning is determined by the success with which it is able to provide the user with relevant information. Traditionally, the library's effectiveness was measured in relation to completeness and balanced collection, the adequacy of acquisitions, cataloguing etc. In recent times, the focus has shifted towards the other end of the knowledge communication process. With the advent of online catalogues, online

databases, other electronic resources (CD-ROM), access to information and new methods of document delivery, the role of the academic library is changing. Users do not have to be physically present in the library in order to access the library's resources (Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey and Frempong, n.d). In essence, the library provides the information needed to enable students well educated in the knowledge processing, assimilation and utilization. Along with the basic concepts of e-learning technology and its applications to user education using software's and hardware requirements, the basic objective of general education is to devise and guide reforms that will transform a nation into a strong and vibrant knowledge economy (Kattimani and Naik, 2012).

Hence, Library user education therefore comprises the gamut of activities ranging from education to individual instruction which libraries provide to users to enable them maximize the library resources and services. Klaib, (2010) in Ilo and Idiegbeyan-Ose, (2011) maintained that user education programme is organized in order to inculcate in users, library use skills, such as bibliographic education and information literacy skills.

Origin of Library User Education

The instruction in the library use has roots as far back as library profession itself. The origin of library user education can be traced back to more than 205 years ago. The earliest evidence of instruction was seen in a librarian lecturing to undergraduates at Harvard College in the 1820s. It was reported that most academic librarians were professors with part-time library appointments who taught the use of library for academic purposes. It was in early 1900s that William Warner Bishop and William Fredrick Pole espoused the concept of library instruction that are still valid today, with the aim of making students independent learners and to clarify the

role of the library in the University. In 1905, William Harper observed that “the equipment of the library will never be finished until it has upon its staff men and women whose sole work shall be, not the care of books, not the cataloguing of books but giving instruction in their use” (Ogunmodede, Adio and Odunola, 2011).

The nomenclature of the instructional programme on how to use the library varies from one university to the other. It is variously referred to as: Library Use Instruction, User Education Programme, Bibliographic Instruction, Library Skills or Library Orientation. It consists of instructional programme designed to teach library users how to locate the information they need quickly, efficiently and independently. It involves teaching library users to acquire basic library use and information literacy skills. It usually covers practical knowledge of the access tools to available information, the library's system of organizing knowledge, electronic resources, reference resources and services, library rules and regulations. It prepares individual library users on how to make immediate and lifelong use of information effectively by teaching the concepts and logic of information access and evaluation, and by fostering information independence and critical thinking (Odu and Edam-Agbor, 2018). As such, Adio, (2006), Akande (2002) in Ogunmodede, Adio and Odunola (2011) stated that the history of development of user education is not recent, particularly the use of academic libraries. This was in line with the view of that library instruction movement as we know it today and the controversies which surround it came to maturity in 1960s.

Library User Education

Ogunsheye (1987) in Nwezeh (2011) asserted that users education causes behavioural and developmental changes and these changes can be observed in attitude towards knowledge

and its utilization. Students and faculty are anxious in selecting databases, accessing and evaluating information from the World Wide Web. The physical references desk used to be the place where librarians caught their breath between patrons but it is not so now. Users in academic libraries have changed just as the work of librarians has changed. The challenge for librarians is to have instructional material that are user-friendly and be able to answer the numerous questions on technical support (Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey and Frempong, n.d). This is user education.

Abubakar and Isyaku (2012) as cited by Bashorun, Aboderin and Lawal (2020) opined User education programme, thus, refers to a well-planned programme of training and educating patrons on the skills and techniques of locating and retrieving library materials. User education is one of the important services of the library organized each year for undergraduates of higher institutions. Similarly, Abah, Chorun and Mbatoron (2016) in Bashorun, Aboderin and Lawal (2020) postulated that user education is an academic programme designed by academic libraries to educate her user's especially undergraduates on how to effectively utilize library resources and services. The researchers explained further that user education quickens the efforts of the clientele in retrieving, aids utilization of library materials. More importantly, whether information comes from the internet, or the World Wide Web, Online databases, books or document, and other possible sources, users need user education for effective usage of information resources. This informed university authorities' decision to make frantic efforts to teach university students library literacy skills through formal library instruction programmes. And this prompted the various methods used for user education in Nigerian University Libraries such as library tour, library orientation, orientation lectures, library instruction, individual instruction, and class instruction to teach library literacy instructions.

Academic libraries have long had a role in helping their users to acquire skills, often under the title- user education, which according to Brophy (2001) in (Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey and Frempong, n.d) reveals a somewhat objectivist and teacher-centred view of learning. User education is essential. It helps publicize library services and improves the image of the library. User education is considered a marketing and welcoming activity and usually forms part of the university's orientation programme for first year students. Academic libraries therefore ought to recognize that students need to be able to obtain, use, and apply information in order to be successful in life.

Bailin and Grafstein, (2005) in Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey and Frempong, (n.d) opined that academic libraries are all about access. Means of access refers to the systems through which the user materially gets hold of the material from the collection: an open stacks system in which the user can take out material for self; a closed stacks system in which the user needs to request a book by means of a call number, an interlibrary loan process, Web-based access to electronic material, etc. Indeed, the way a collection is organized, including the classification system, is also part of the means through which the collection is accessed. Library catalogues serve as a direct means of access in addition to their traditional role as finding aids.

According to Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey and Frempong, (n.d) ,Librarians can educate users through:

- Library publications which are effective means through which the libraries can market its resources to its users. Among such publications are Readers Guide, Library Bulletin and Accession Lists. University libraries give their newly registered users copies of their Readers Guide. The Readers Guide includes information on the layout of the library, opening and closing hours, names and designations of the professional staff, organisation of the Library, rules and regulations, registration procedures, borrowing privileges and

procedures and how to use the catalogue. The Readers' Guide is a very important publication because no library's service is complete without its guide that provides information about its resources and the way to make optimal use of them.

- The Library Bulletin is another medium which carries information about the library. The Library Bulletin includes new services, and becomes useful and relevant if it is timely and regularly published. Unfortunately, all the public university libraries with the exception of some have suspended or infrequently published their bulletin mainly due to financial constraints.

Furthermore, User education is essential. It helps to publicize library services. It improves the image of the library. User education and training are often free, because developing the infrastructure for the network environment is very costly, however, government takes care of it. Several new methods of information transfer, such as mechanized information retrieval systems, are being developed, giving rise to new aspects of user education. Both educational and research topics are becoming increasingly multidisciplinary in nature, thereby drawing information from a wider range of sources. Therefore, User Education has become paramount for library users. In other words, thorough planning is needed to ensure that all activities carried out are towards meeting the institutional goal which is knowledge acquisition. Commitment to educate users should be reflected in the mission statement of the library. This should be followed by a written user education policy (Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey and Frempong, n.d).

User education programmes should aim at making all users aware of the information resources available, both directly in the library and from external sources and enable users to enjoy the search for such information. It is interesting to note that many of the objectives and policies should be listed in libraries to stress the self-sufficiency of users through a successful

user education programme. Written policies and objectives on user education provide a basis for self-evaluation. This could be used to answer questions like, is the user education programme achieving what it was set out to achieve? If not, more detailed studies on user information needs should be conducted.

User education programmes need continuous revision to keep up to date with the changing information environment. Written objectives for instruction should be derived from the written profiles of the information needs of the users. Universities have unique identities as each university library must design its own course to meet the immediate needs of its clientele as well as fit into the university teaching programme (Nithyanandam, Kanniyappan, Dhanakar and Rajasekar, 2006). It is therefore worthy of note that the essence of user education is to acquaint the library users with different services rendered by the university libraries to its clients. Thus, Anene, Achebe and Uzoechina (2018) expressed that these services include lending services inter- library lending; referral service, reservation services, Current Awareness Services (CAS) Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), translation service, reprographic services, among others that the users must be acquainted with through user education programme.

Afebende and Akin-Fakorede, (2018) observed the most prevalent user education programmes in times past and still being practiced in many libraries in Nigeria are:

- (1) bibliographic instructions which emphasis use of books, catalogues, periodicals, indexes/abstract and bibliographies,
- (2) library orientation and instruction which place emphasis on the physical location of items in the library and services and

(3) partial credit-earning courses in general studies education which focus on a broad range of topics for library and information based institutional need. However, these can no longer stand the test of time in the ICT-based and digital information age. Computers and information communication technologies have Influenced and significantly changed the entire landscape in library information infrastructure services, provision and delivery. New methods of information transfer, automated and digital retrieval systems and online electronic resources have today become the norm. Library instructions also need to be presented in power point technologies and web-based lessons on the internet etc. This has necessitated a new approach to user education coined in Information Literacy Studies (ILS) or education.

Effects of Library User Education on Use of Library

Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey and Frempong, (n.d) library resources should be utilized judiciously as this is the reason for its provision. The notion of a library as a place is changing and as a result, libraries that are not meeting the needs of their users will not be effective or successful. Usage of libraries is also increasingly changing. For academic libraries to be effective in providing vital services such as reference, serials, bibliographic, technical (cataloguing and classification), lending and literature searches to their users they must adopt modern strategies which would attract these users into the libraries especially in this information and communications technology (ICT) age.

Foo et. al., (2002) in Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey and Frempong,(n.d) additionally, expressed that library users continue to have increased expectations about materials that are available in and/through the library. Library users are more casual about library use, however, they want faster delivery of information through interlibrary loan and document delivery. Users'

expectations are high expecting that library staff will provide them with the one-on-one help they need in order to use technology more effectively. Users want and need guidance concerning the use of the Internet. Everyone continues to expect and need technical support.

Uwakwe et al. (2016) in Bashorun, Aboderin and Lawal (2020) examined the effect of user education on the law students' use of the library in Imo State University Owerri. The study revealed that user education programme has positively affected the use of the library and their academic performance. Obasuyi and Odion (2015) in Bashorun, Aboderin and Lawal (2020) investigated the effectiveness and impact of library instruction (GST 111 – the use of library) course on library literacy skills of first year undergraduates. Results revealed that the library instruction was well perceived by the students as adequate and effective.

In addition, Punchihewa, Kiriella, Kumara and Kodikara, (2016) expressed that a user survey was adopted and the undergraduate students and post graduate students who have participated in library user education programmes during 2014-2015 was the target group. Results of the study discovered that 88% of the students have gained the knowledge on library resources and services through the library user education programmes. Most importantly, 91.3% of students have stated that they were equipped with good research skills by participating in these library user education programmes. Results of this study encourage the library to continue the user education programmes to keep building research skills of the students while making necessary adjustments to fulfill the needs of modern library users should be made.

Challenges to Library User Education Programme

Ewa (2012), Nwabueze, Ozioko and Igwesi (2013) as cited in Bashorun, Aboderin and Lawal (2020) reported that user education enhances library use even though the programme is

faced with a lot of problems which include inadequate fund, inappropriate provision for the user education course on the time table, inadequate library staff to cope with the amount of work involved. All these factors could lead to dissatisfaction in user education. Similarly, it was reiterated that there were some major impediments to effective use of library by students in the higher institutions which included lack of periodic user education programme, and lack of relevant and up to date resources, inadequate staff to assist users, poor attitude of staff towards users.

Blummer, Kenton & Song (2010); Chen (2011); Fallon & Breen (2012); Maduako (2013); Ogunmodede, Adio & Odunole (2011) in Moyane, Dube and Hoskins, (2015) affirmed that despite the recognition that user education is capable of adding value to university education, in particular academic outcomes, it has emerged from the literature that, in certain circumstances, user education can be ineffective when bedeviled by challenges. Like any other initiative or project, user education is susceptible to pitfalls which, if not well anticipated and managed, can be barriers to the successful implementation of user education. Thus, they submitted that some of the factors that could inhibit the successful implementation of user education include, but are not limited to poor planning; lack of strategic direction and commitment by library management; lack of cooperation from stakeholders; inappropriate communication strategies and tools; lack of human, financial and time resources; improper time allocation and poor time management.

Additionally, Joseph (2005) in Anene, Achebe and Uzoechina (2018) identified the following as problems of user education programme in Nigerian academic libraries as over dependence on one day orientation programme; lack of collective curriculum for user education in Nigerian tertiary institutions; lack of examinable library institution; over concentration of

librarian on library technical services like acquisition, cataloguing and classification and shelving of books rather than information retrieval mechanism; and the use of unqualified personnel to teach the use of library in some institutions.

Proffered Solution to the Challenges of Library User Education Programme

Blummer, Kenton & Song (2010); Chen (2011); Fallon & Breen (2012); Maduako (2013); Ogunmodede, Adio & Odunole (2011) in Moyane, Dube and Hoskins, (2015) suggest strategies that could be used to counteract these inhibitors of good and productive library user education and they include: proper planning and coordination; prioritizing the course as part of the library's core agenda; using skills audit results to inform user education programmes; aligning with or embedding user education programmes into subject domains; implementing progressive programmes instead of once-off initiatives; adopting a participatory and inclusive approach; and improving communication strategies.

Moreover, administrators need to assess the relationship between the library and the computer center, as both fight for limited resources. The growing universe of print-based publications and digital documents on the one hand, and the declining universe of library budgets on the other, can be handled confidently by adopting certain strategies, such as by developing critical thinking skills, as well as promoting information literacy at large (Nithyanandam, Kanniyappan, Dhanakar and Rajasekar, 2006).

Finally, In the near future, users should expect timely access to quality information. This information must be accurate, relevant, comprehensive, and engaging. This can be done successfully by incorporating user education and training components into the academic library programmes and developing continuing professional education and training for the library and

information professionals, as well as the end-users who will have to develop learning attitude and network related competence by the use information and communication technologies (Nithyanandam, Kanniyappan, Dhanakar and Rajasekar, 2006).

Conclusion and Recommendations

What emerged from the foregoing discussion is that, because of the quantity and complexity of information as well as the economics of information as a commodity and the apparent pressure to prove return on the investment of government on information, libraries need to prioritize user education and equip the user with skills to navigate and explore information resources satisfactorily (Moyane, Dube and Hoskins, 2015). Hence, Nigerian University Libraries should handle Library User Education with all seriousness for the success of the students in school and in later life.

References

- Afebende, G. B. and Akin-Fakorede, O. (2018). Information Literacy Studies: A Panacea for Creativity and Innovation for Educational Reforms in Nigeria. *International Journal of Education Development*, 22(1), 1-13
- Agyen-Gyasi, K., Lamptey, R. and Frempong, A.(n.d). Academic Librarians' Role in Maximizing Library Use in Ghana. Available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/561>
- Anene I. A., Achebe N. E., and Uzoechina C. E.(2018). Application of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) for effective user education programme in federal university libraries in south east, Nigeria. *International Journal of Library and Information Science*. Available at: DOI: 10.5897/IJLIS2018.0844
- Bashorun, M.T., Aboderin, O.A. and Lawal, W.O (2020). User education programmes as correlate of information literacy skills among undergraduates in universities in Osun State, Nigeria. *Journal of Library Services and Technologies*, 2(1), 1–16. Available at: credencepressltd.com
- Fliss, L. (1999). The concept of integration in industrial development. *Regional African Project Management*. Retrieved from: <https://cdn.ymaws.com>

- Ilo, P.I. and Idiegbeyan-ose, J. (2011). Library User Education Programme for Covenant University Freshmen: Impact, Challenges and Possible Solutions. *Samaru Journal of Information Studies*, 11 (1 & 2), 7-12
- Kattimani, S. F. & Naik, R. R. (2012). E-Learning Technology in the ICT Era: Application to Technical Education. *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology*. 32 (6), 459-467.
- Moyane,S.P., Dube, L., and Hoskins, R.(2015). Evaluating user education programmes for postgraduate students in the School of Management, Information Technology and Governance at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Available at: <http://sajlis.journals.ac.za>
- Nithyanandam,K., Kanniyappan, E., Dhanakar, M.A. and Rajasekar, V.(2006). User Education Programmes and Academic Libraries. 4th International Convention CALIBER-2006, Gulbarga, 2-4 February. Available at: ir.inflibnet.ac.in
- Nweze,C.M.T. (2011).Undergraduate Library Instruction in Nigerian Universities: A Case Study of Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal). Available at: <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/495>
- Odu, J.O and Edam-Agbor, I.B. (2018). Library use instruction and the pattern of Utilization of library services by Undergraduates in the University of Calabar, Nigeria. *Global Journal Of Educational Research* Vol. 17, 87-95. Available at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gjedr.v17i1.11>
- Ogunmodede, T.A, Adio, G. and Odunola, O.A. (2011). Library Use Education as a Correlate of Use of Library Resources in a Nigerian University. *Library Philosophy and Practice* (e-journal). Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/604>
- Punchihewa, C.N.D., Kiriella, K.G.A.P., Kumara, A.D.B. and Kodikara, R. C. (2016). Students' attitudes and perceptions on library user education programmes: A case study. Available at: <http://repository.kln.ac.lk/handle/123456789/14986>