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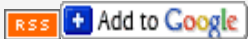
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Students Use of Academic Libraries in Nigeria: A Case of Obafemi Awolowo University Library, Ile-Ife

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Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile-Ife, Nigeria

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Obafemi Awolowo University
Ile-Ife, Nigeria

Introduction

One of the objectives of setting up a university is to encourage and promote scholarship and conduct research in all field of learning and human endeavour. The three major infrastructure are teachers/classrooms, laboratories and libraries that contain a rich and balanced collection and equipment that can support the teaching and learning process as well as research (Ajibero 2004).

Librarians have information dissemination as their predominant function. The library has a unique position as a potential educational force. For this role, library holdings are organized for maximum exploitation by users. The effectiveness of a library as an instrument of education is determined by the success with which it is able to provide the user with information he/she seeks. The library can fulfill this function best by pursuing a policy of constant self evaluation in order to be alert to the changing needs of its users.

Ajibero (1995) sees the University Library as the heart of the University and no other single non human factor is as closely related to the quality of university education. The philosophy of librarianship is based on the concept of service and the provision of relevant materials for users. Professional Librarians have continued the struggle of collecting and organizing printed and other forms of recorded knowledge in order to satisfy both present and future users.

In this survey, an attempt was made to find out to what extent students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife make use of library resources and effort was made to identify the likely causes of use or lack of use of resources.

Review of Literature

Academic library use studies have evolved over the years. The problem of under utilization of library resources is a global one. Various user researches have probed user attitudes as well as the characteristics of use, reasons for library visits, and factors related to the use of the different types of library materials. Patrick Knapp (1959) found widespread lack of understanding among faculty members about what a library really is and how to use it. Katebi (1977) surveyed the reading habits of students at the University of Tehran and found that students do not look at reading as a way of acquiring knowledge or developing character, primarily because of deficiencies in the educational system. Peter Mann (1974) revealed during his research in Britain, that undergraduates are able to complete their courses of study with relatively little use of library books.

Purpose of Study

This study was designed to provide approximate estimation of the existing use patterns of Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library. It was designed to gather information about the characteristics of students who use the library and the way in which they make use of its facilities. Use factors aid in planning and justifying library programmes. Therefore accurate measurement of library use is essential in order to achieve set objectives.

Methodology

The technique employed to secure meaningful data was an opinion survey. The survey instrument, consists of two types of questionnaires. One of the questionnaires was for students while one was for faculty members. In addition to the questionnaires, a good number of the two categories of respondents were interviewed for a more intimate appraisal and assessment of the answers provided in the questionnaires.

Also a personal observation in the library was made by the writer to supplement and corroborate all the evidences given. The questionnaire for faculty members concentrated on the guidance they gave to the students in using the library; provision of reading lists and introducing books in class. They were also invited to comment on the behaviour pattern of students in the use of the library and their reading habits.

A total of 500 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to students of which 450 (90%) were returned in usable form, while 50 copies of questionnaires were distributed to the faculty members.

Analysis of the Data

The total number of questionnaires distributed were 550. Among the respondents 385 (70%) were male and 165 ((30%) were female. Analysis of the data showed that 450 students responded to the questionnaire. It should be pointed out that in the process of analyzing the different variables, it was discovered that some students failed to respond to some of the questions. This has resulted in some missing cases in

the analysis of data.

Student Use of the Library

The students were asked to indicate the amount of time they spent in the library. Apart from knowing precisely how long they stayed in the library, the other aim of the questionnaire was to find out the differences if any between students in the different years of study.

From table 1, it will be seen that 250 (55.6%) spent between one to two hours daily in the library. Within this category, about 150 students representing 60% were first year students, 47 were second year students, 28 were third year students, 17 were fourth year students, 6 were students over and above four years of study and only 2 postgraduate students. One hundred and forty students representing 31.1% spent three hours in the library daily. Of these, postgraduate students, fourth year students and students over and above four years of students were in the majority. Sixty students, representing 13.3% spent four hours in the library daily. The postgraduate and students above four years of study were in the majority here.

Table 1. DIFFERENCES IN HOURS SPENT IN THE LIBRARY BY STUDENTS ACCORDING TO YEAR OF STUDY

HOURS	YEAR OF STUDY						Total	Percentage %
	1st Year Students	2nd Year Students	3rd Year Student	4th Year Student	4th Years and above	Post-graduate Students		
1-2 hours	150	47	28	17	6	2	250	55.6%
3 hours	12	15	23	30	40	20	140	31.1%
4 hours	2	5	7	13	17	14	60	13.3%

*The proportion of hours spent increased with year of study. The older students spent more hours in the library.

Although most of the students spent one to four hours daily in the library, the survey showed that much of the time was spent reading their own books, lecture notes, magazines and the dailies. Table 2 show the activities of students within the library.

Table 2. ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE LIBRARY

Activity	Always	Sometimes	Never	Missing Cases
1. Study without using library material	80(17.7%)	300(66.7%)	40 (8.9%)	30 (6.7%)
2. Use of library material within the library	120 (26.7%)	280 (62.2%)	30 (6.7%)	20 (4.4%)
3. Checkout library material	90 (20%)	230	100	30 (6.7%)

	(51.1%)	(22.2%)	
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Attempt was made in the questionnaire to find out which library materials students frequently use. Table 3 shows that 400 respondents (88.9%) use library books while 350 (77.8%) use journals. Some 250 respondents (55.6%) read newspapers when ever they come to the library, while government publications, indexes and abstracts and microforms are used by only 60 (13.3%), 50 (11.1%) and 2 (0.4%) of the respondents respectively.

Table 3. TYPES OF LIBRARY MATERIALS USED

Type of Material	Total number of responses	Users	Non-Users
1 Books	450	400 (88.9%)	50 (11.1%)
2 Journals	449	350 (77.6%)	99 (78.8%)
3 Newspapers	450	180 (42.2%)	270 (57.8%)
4 Government Publications	449	60 (13.3%)	389 (87.7%)
5 Indexes and Abstracts	450	50 (11.1%)	400 (88.9%)
6 Microforms	448	2 (0.4%)	446 (99.6%)

Students Ability to Use the Library

Generally responses from students as to their knowledge of the library and library procedures were not encouraging. From answers given, it showed that majority did not even know the simple retrieval approaches. Many of the respondents claimed that they were not aware of the existence of reserved collections and how to use them. Twenty five percent of respondents showed that they would consult the card catalogue first if they wanted to obtain a book from the library while forty percent mentioned the circulation desk as the first place of call.

Users reaction to Non-Availability of Required Titles.

In the survey, the writer asked students to indicate, on failing to get the books they wanted, if they did any of the following:

- Ask a librarian/library staff for help;
- Plan to visit another library;
- Look for alternative book;
- Abandoned the search.

Three hundred respondent (66.7%) responded that they sought the help of library staff, while two hundred and fifty (33.3%) responded negatively. Fifty respondents

(11.1%) stated that at times they seek assistance while at other times they do not. Three hundred and thirty (73.3%) respondents on failing to get the book wanted gave up search and went away frustrated.

Students use of books and libraries in academic institutions depend largely on faculty attitudes towards the library, its role in the educational process, and the way faculty promote and encourage students' use of the library by way of their own examples as well as their teaching methods. Questions were asked to find out the situation as regards this. Three hundred and fifty respondents (77.8%) reported that few or none of their lecturers gave reading lists nor mentioned or recommended books in class. The few who did receive reading lists were satisfied and found them very useful. On whether they received any guidance from lecturers, in the use of the library, 420 (93.3%) of the respondents said they did not get any form of guidance. The few that received were mainly post graduate students and training was concentrated largely in the use of abstracts.

Data Gathered from Faculty

Some of the questions asked were meant to get some background information about each lecturer. They were asked if they had any formal or informal training in library use, how many hours each of them spend in the library every week. Questions were asked on how much assistance each of the lecturers gave to students. The questionnaire asked if the lecturer gave reading lists to his students or recommended books in class. The lecturer was asked the type of guidance he/she gave the students on the use of the library. Ninety percent of the lecturers said that they did not have any training on library use. Sixty five percent said they spend less than three hours per week in the library. Twenty percent said they did not spend anytime in the library while the remaining eight percent said they spend over five hours per week in the library.

The implication is that a lecturer who has no library training is not likely to be able to train a student on how to use the library. A lecturer who scarcely visited the library, would not be able to encourage or motivate his/her students in the use of the library.

Recommendation

Based on the analysis of the data it is thereby recommended that:

- The usual library orientation for freshmen should be revolutionised to enable students conceptualise the use of library. Slides and motion pictures should be used to practicalise the instructions given to them;
- Librarians should work more closely with teaching faculty to make students aware of libraries resources.
- An aggressive and large scale user education programme should be introduced in all institutions of higher learning in Nigeria. Such a programme should focus on the use of the library, advantages of reference services to students; the role of librarians and their relation to students.
- Librarians should find new ways of eliciting faculty co-operation, whose assistance and support would increase students use of the libraries.
- Emphasis should be placed on providing functional library building.
- Library users should be treated with respect and they should be made to feel important.
- Libraries should be pleasant and comfortable. The library environment should

- be made to be welcoming to the users.
- Librarians and the other library staff should be friendly and willing to help students who have problems locating what they need in the library.

Future Research Recommendations

Shifting the focus from large architectural masterpieces and massive collections, which few people actually use, to and determining usage of library resources will help in providing service quality and user satisfaction. It is important to focus on service quality and user satisfaction at this time when libraries are having difficulty identifying their users.

There is need to back up service quality and user satisfaction surveys periodically with other types of feedback:

- Complaint/suggestion box at a visible location.
- Small in-depth interviews with users

Future researchers should look into the following:

- How can library staff get to know its users and know what they want, how they utilize the libraries' resources if they actually use them. How can the library staff build a good collection without user input? Now that the Obafemi Awolowo University library is computerizing its resources, students are fascinated with the resources available on the internet. How can the students connect to the libraries' resources from anywhere in the world with their IDs and access accounts? How do we tract the users satisfaction. These are additional questions that future research should attempt to address.

Conclusion

Students' academic work suffers because of failure to use the library resources to its fullest potential, Satisfying users needs in the academic libraries should be academic objective of libraries and librarians. Librarians and library administrators are expected to provide the best possible quality service to their users. It can be concluded that attempts at assessing the students use of the library has focused attention on the library and its position as a potential educational force. The library stores a lot of information and the importance of information in all human endeavours is becoming overwhelming in this era of information technology. Information is presently used to measure the wealth of a nation, hence, information rich countries are also economically wealthy ones. The Obafemi Awolowo Library is on the second phase on its computerization. It is hoped that this study will arouse the interest of other researchers and thereby stimulate further studies of the library.

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