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# **Utilization of Law Library Collections for Improving Academic Performance by Undergraduate Law Students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka**

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## **Abstract**

This study showcases the law library collections and their utilization by the undergraduate students of Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The objectives of the study were to determine the extent of the use being made of the resources by the undergraduate law students of the university, the types of law library resources, benefits derived and the frequency of use. The research method was a descriptive survey. The population consisted of the law undergraduate students of the university in the 2013/2014 academic session which had 550 registered users of the library. The sample was 132 students made up of 100 to 500 levels. 132 questionnaire were administered randomly to the students. Out of this number, 132 was returned representing 100% rate of response. Data collected were analysed using frequency count and simple percentage. The study shows that greater number of law students use law library at least twice a week for preparing for examinations. In the light of this, the study recommended that the law library should be adequately stocked with current and relevant law resources, as well as improving the reading environment so as to make it more conducive for learning and research.

Keywords: Law library collections, faculty of law, frequency of use, law journals, law statutes, law reports.

## **Introduction:**

Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka was established in 1982 as Awka campus of the then Anambra State University of Technology, (ASUTECH) Enugu. In 1991, following the creation of new Anambra State, the University was named Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The Faculty of Law was established in 1986 with its campus at Awka. In 1992, the Federal Government of Nigeria took over the university. The law library was established alongside the faculty of law at its permanent side of the university as a separate

block. In 2010, the faculty of law with its library moved to her permanent building, with the library occupying the second floor of the building.

The primary assignment of the law library is to cater for the education, research and community needs of the faculty. This should be done through providing reference services on all law-related topics, assisting in the use of electronic legal resources, evaluating the authenticity and accuracy of legal resources, assisting law students, lecturers and non-lawyers in accessing the law and monitoring trends in specific legal fields.

To show how important law libraries are, Dada (2007), remarked that law is a profession which is literally unable to exercise its work without the use of books. He said that it is important to conclude that as an operating theatre is important to a Surgeon, a workshop to an Engineer and a laboratory to a Scientist, so is a law library central to the work of a lawyer or a legal researcher.

To achieve the objectives for which the law library was set up, the Nnamdi Azikiwe University law library ensured the acquisition of the following resources, law text books, law journals, law statutes, law reports, newspapers, magazines, research projects, non-legal books that relate to law, electronic books, etc. It is therefore sensible to claim that the quality of information resources acquired, organized, preserved and made available by any library is key to producing sound intellectuals, (Okereke, Onayeyan and Ogbuiyi, 2014). To accomplish their educational objectives, law students need to make effective use of the library resources relevant to their studies (Olorunfemi, Mostert and Ocholla, 2012).

Generally, the major objectives of this study was to determine the extent to which law students utilize the law library resources of Nnamdi Azikiwe University for improving their academic pursuit. Specifically, the objectives were to, determine the objectives, purpose and aims of establishing the law library; determine the types of law library resources used by students; determine the benefits derived in the use of the library resources; determine the frequency of use of the law library resources by students; identify the challenges encountered by students in the use of the resources; and suggest ways of improving the services to the students.

### **Review of Related Literature:**

A law library according to Ukpanah and Afolabi (2011) is a collection of legal information organized for use of those seeking to qualify as, or who have qualified as lawyers and those enacting or administering law. The ability of the law library to meet the diverse information needs of its clientele depends on among other things, the availability of an array of documentary and non-book materials.

The collection of law library resources should involve the discovering of weak areas of the resources that need to be empowered, as well as the strong areas that need to be evaluated with a view to reaffirming their relevance in satisfying users demands. Kotso (2007), said that the need for standard

collection for the law libraries in terms of quantity and quality cannot be over emphasized, saying that they must have the depth of the subject of law as well as the disciplinary diversities.

According to Tuyo (2007), a law library that intends to be relevant in any academic institution must ensure that its collections are adequate. He mentioned some of the basic reference titles that a law library is expected to have in its collection as, complete sets of the up-to-date Laws of the Federation and Laws of the States, Law Reports of the Supreme Court, Court of Appeal, Federal High Courts and the State High Courts, law reports of at least Commonwealth countries, secondary works that are needed to support the teaching of the subjects offered especially the core subjects; precedent books of foreign countries such as Britain, America and some Asian countries, legal dictionaries and other dictionaries, Thesaurus legal bibliographies and both legal and general encyclopedias.

Quality and quantity of law library resources are necessary if the objectives of the library are to be met. The age of books in a collection used for teaching and learning is a useful parameter to assess the quality of the collection. Lumande and Ojedokun (2005), stated that the effectiveness of a collection depends on the extent to which a library collection can facilitate research activities and how much students can rely on it for project and assignment.

Building a balanced collection in any library can be very effective through the introduction of collection development policy. Olanlokun and Adekanye (2005), submitted that collection development policy is an important aspect of library service that can promote libraries. They went on to say that university libraries need to rise up to their responsibilities by providing materials capable of supporting teaching, learning and research, and also for community services. No library that is serious about maintaining a balanced stock can afford not to have a collection development policy which contains a list of guidelines as to what is suitable for requisition in a particular library.

In trying to balance the stock, efforts should be made to be guided by the academic programme/curriculum of the faculty. Oseghale (2008), said that curriculum is the frame upon which the library collection is built. According to National Universities Commission (1989), the curriculum of programme is the totality of the experiences that is offered by the institution to achieve the philosophy, goals and objectives of the type and level of education. For the Faculty of Law, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, there is a document titled "Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Faculty of Law, Undergraduate Academic Programme, Revised 2006".

Law libraries have been recognized as the "heart" of every law faculty in all universities. It is the pivot on which the faculties revolve for attainment of their educational excellence, goals and objectives. The assemblage of books and non-book information purveyors in the required quantity and quality depends on good collection development activities. Library is central to and it is in fact the laboratory for the legal profession. Dada (2010), said that as the legal profession expands, so are the law library facilities growing

correspondingly by leaps and bounds. The National Universities Commission (1989), which is the regulating body and clearing house for universities in Nigeria approved a document which seeks to set uniform standards for law libraries, both in terms of staffing and holdings. This is to ensure that all law libraries have the relevant current and adequate law books and periodicals required for them to pass accreditations.

The services of the law library are tailored along the line of the services of every main library. Such services include routing of current law journals, selective dissemination of information, abstracting and indexing services, bibliographies and reading lists, reference services (Anyago and Agidi 2013). In some law libraries, you may find circulation services, others operate close access. The law libraries offer some services which are peculiar to them. Bradley, Cownie, Masson, Neal and Newell (2005) enumerated such services to include finding cases, using law reports, updating cases, using electronic retrieval facilities (Lexis Nexis, Westlaw, HeinOnline, etc), finding and updating statutes (noter-up) etc. Olurunsola (2009), enumerated some factors that motivate readers into using the libraries as:

- \* the size and currency of the collection,
- \* availability of Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure,
- \* conducive learning environment;
- \* well trained staff.

Lamenting on the factors that impact on the use of law library resources, Lawal and Okwueze (2007), supporting Nwafor (1997) discovered that a low level of funding of university libraries has led to the deterioration in the quality of library collections. Owolabi and Akintola (2000), who discovered lack of funds as major hindrance to the acquisition of new materials, also mentioned exchange rate and economic recession as one of the collections development problems. Another problem of collection development is the mounting costs of books and periodicals. The problem of loss of purchasing power could be relieved by equivalent growth in library budgets. Okoye (2008), said that almost all university libraries' materials budget have not been growing at a rate that commensurate with inflation, even though costs of publications have outstripped the inflation rate. Nnadozie (2006), recorded 83.3 percent responses on high cost of materials as one of the major constraints to law library collection development in Nigerian university libraries.

It is usually impossible to procure materials published overseas without obtaining the appropriate foreign currency. On this, Eze and Eze (2006), said that presently, getting foreign exchange in the country poses a lot of problems and when one succeeds, the rate is often very high. Olanlokun and Adekaye (2005), discovered that problems facing library collections in Nigeria include foreign exchange, and the large population of students.

Nnadozie (2006), recorded 50 percent response in his research on distance of publishing houses from the consumers as one of the greatest problems facing collection development in institutions' libraries. This went to buttress Ogunrombi's (1997) observation that the collections of Nigerian academic libraries are deplete with materials published in foreign countries. Okereke, Onoyeyan and Ogbuiyi (2014) citing Apotiade (2002) sees inadequate and unqualified staffing as a hindrance to the use of library information. They also cited him as identifying insufficient space as another factor that inhibits use of library resources.

Okereke, Onoyeyan and Ogbuiyi (2014) in Altman and Weils (2006) enumerated the factors that are capable of affecting adversely the use of library as:

- \* reading in an unconducive environment;
- \* lack of written procedure and manuals that can direct non-trained library staff.

This they said results in frequent misshelving of materials, and a lack of commitment in doing desk work.

**Methodology:**

The design of this study was descriptive survey. The population of the study consisted of undergraduate law students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State in the 2013/2014 academic session. The session had 550 registered law students. The sample population of 132 students was used. The population covered all law students from level 100 to 500. 132 questionnaire items were administered on the students using random sampling techniques and as they were seated using the law library. All the administered questionnaire items were returned representing 100 percent rate of response. The questionnaire administration was carried out by the researchers themselves while the students were seated and using the library and were collected back from the respondent after a reasonable time.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

**Table 1: Population and Sample Size**

Level	Population	Sample Size
100	80	20
200	110	28
300	120	28
400	115	28
500	125	28

Total	550	132
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Table 1 above shows the population and sample size of the respondents used in the study. This involves the different levels and their population, including the sample sizes that were collected therein. The 100 level students were eighty (80) in population and twenty (20) were selected. The 200 level were 110 and 28 were selected, 300 level were 120 and 28 were selected. 28 students were selected each from the 400 level students with a population of 115, and 500 level with a population of 125.

Table 2: Frequency of Use of the Law Library

S/No	How Often	Frequency	Percentage
i	Daily	24	18.2%
ii	Twice a week	20	15.2%
iii	Thrice a week	56	42.4%
iv	Once of week	0	0%
v	Once a month	0	0%
vi	Occasionally	32	24.2%
vii	Not at all	0	0%
viii	No response	0	0%
Total		132	100%

Table 2 shows that 42.4% of the respondents visit and use the law library thrice a week, 24.2% use it occasionally, 18.2% visit daily, 15.2% twice a week, while no respondent admitted visiting once a week, once a month or not at all.

Table 3: Motives for using the Law Library

S/No	Motives	Frequency	Percentage
i	To write assignment	60	45.5%
ii	To read library books	40	30.3%
iii	To borrow books	8	6.1%
iv	To use internet facility	4	3.0%
v	To read newspapers	24	18.2%
vi	To report cases	88	66.7%

vii	To read journal articles	20	15.2%
viii	To supplement lecture notes	64	48.5%
ix	To write projects	28	21.2%
x	To prepare for seminar presentation/moot court.	16	12.1%
xi	To photocopy materials	36	27.3%
xii	To bind books	4	3.0%
xiii	To prepare for examinations	100	75.8%
xiv	To visit friends.	4	3.0%

Table 3 shows that 75.8% of the respondents use the law library for preparing for examinations, 66.7% use it to report cases, 48.5% to supplement lecture notes. 45.5% use the library for writing assignments, 30.3% for reading library books, 27.3% for photocopying purposes, 21.2% for writing projects, 18.2% for reading newspapers. Other uses include 15.2% for reading law journal articles, 12.1% for preparing for seminar presentation/moot court, 6.1% for borrowing books and 3.0% for using internet facility, to bind books and to visit friends.

Table 4: Resources Used

S/No	Resources	Frequency	Percentage
i	Textbooks	100	75.8%
ii	Journals	24	18.2%
iii	Law Reports	108	81.8%
iv	Statutes, laws decrees, etc	56	42.4%
v	Reference materials	52	39.4%
vi	E-mail facility	0	0%
vii	Internet facility	0	0%
viii	Electronic database	0	0%
ix	Projects	20	15.6%
x	Newspapers/Magazines	36	27.3%

Table 4 shows that 81.8% of the respondents indicated law reports as the resources they use in the law library, 75.8% indicated textbooks, while 42.4% indicated statutes, laws, decrees, etc. 39.4% of the respondents showed that the resources they use is reference materials, 27.3% newspapers/magazines, 18.2% law journals, 15.6% past students' projects while no respondent indicated E-mail facility, internet facility and electronic database as resources used.

Table 5: Advantages of Using the Law Library

S/No	Advantages	Frequency	Percentage
i	Opportunity of borrowing books	16	12.1%
ii	Privilege of consulting the past projects	32	24.2%
iii	Enriching lecture notes	76	57.6%
iv	Opportunity of preparing for seminars	16	12.1%
v	Preparing for moot court	24	18.2%
vi	Writing assignments	80	60.6%
vii	Preparing for examinations	100	75.8%
viii	Conducting research	56	42.4%
ix	Photocopying materials	32	24.2%
x	Accessing the internet	4	3.0%
xi	Making reference	56	42.4%
xii	Opportunity to read books, law reports, etc	100	75.8%
xiii	Opportunity of reading in a conducive environment.	96	72.7%

Table 5 shows that 75.8% of the respondents enjoyed the benefit of using the law library for preparing for examinations and to read books, law reports and journal articles, 72.7% for reading in a conducive environment, and 60.6% for writing assignments. Other benefits include 57.6% for enriching lecture notes, 42.4% for making references and conducting research, 24.2% for consulting the past students' projects and making photocopies. Further, 18.2% of the respondents enjoyed the use of the law library in preparing for moot court, 12.1% for preparing for seminars and borrowing books, while 3.0% benefited from accessing the internet.

Table 6: Hindrances to the Use of the Law Library

S/No	Hindrances	Frequency	Percentage
i	Inadequacy of desired materials (books, law reports, journals, etc)	60	45.5%
ii	Lack of internet access	72	54.5%
iii	Poor electricity power supply	16	12.1%
iv	Poor lighting inside the library	4	3.0%
v	Poor ventilation	4	3.0%
vi	Lack of quiet and conducive environment	24	18.9%
vii	Lack of adequate seating spaces	4	3.0%
viii	Unfriendly attitude of library staff	44	33.3%
ix	Lack of standby generator	16	12.1%
x	Lack of photocopying facility	4	3.0%
xi	Inadequate library opening hours.	12	9.1%

The study in Table 6 revealed that lack of internet access is the strongest challenge to students' use of the law library (54.5%). The second highest challenge which attracted 45.5% of the response is inadequacy of desired materials (books, law reports, journals, etc), followed by unfriendly attitude of the library staff which attracted 33.3%. Poor electricity power supply and lack of standby generator attracted 12.1%, inadequate library opening hours attracted 9.1%. Poor lighting inside the library, poor ventilation, lack of adequate seating spaces and lack of photocopying facilities each attracted the least response of 3.0%.

Table 7: Level of Fulfillment With the Resources

S/No	Level of Fulfillment	Frequency	Percentage
i	Highly satisfied	16	12.1%
ii	Satisfied	100	75.8%
iii	Unsatisfied	12	9.1%
iv	Highly unsatisfied	0	0%
v	Undecided	4	3.0%

Total	132	100%
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Table 7 shows that 75.8% of the respondents were satisfied with the resources of the law library, while 12.1% were highly satisfied. 9.1% were not satisfied with the resources, 3.0% were undecided, while non of the respondents (0%) was highly unsatisfied.

### **Discussions:**

The study showed that a greater number of students (42.4%) use the law library twice a week. Greater number of students use it to prepare for examinations, followed by the use for reporting cases (66.7%), while the least use is for internet facility, to bind books and to visit friends.

It was discovered that law reports form the biggest resources (81.8%) used by students, followed by law textbooks (75.8%). Surprisingly, past students' projects recorded (15.6%) use. This could be attributed to fact that it is only the 500 level students that make use of past projects. No student indicated to have used E-mail facility, internet facility and electronic database in the law library. A reasonable number of students (75.8%) indicated to have benefited from using the law library for preparing for examinations, to read library books, law reports and journal articles. Another 72.7% benefited from reading in a conducive environment while 60.6% benefited from writing assignments. It is really unfortunate that in this era of ICT, students recorded 3.0% benefit for accessing the internet.

The law student's respondents recorded lack of internet access as the highest challenge (54.5%). Inadequacy in the resources scored 45.5% which is rather on the high side, and library staff unfriendly attitude to students scored 33.3% which is not fair. Judging from the score of 3.0% for poor lighting inside the library, poor ventilation, lack of adequate seating spaces, and lack of photocopying facility, one could say that these facilities are adequate. About three quarters (75.8%) of the respondents were very satisfied with the resources of the library, while 12.1% were highly satisfied. This goes to attest to the fact that the resources of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Law Library is adequate.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations:**

The study has shown some in-depth knowledge of the utilization of the law library collections of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Most students use the library thrice a week, and another reasonable number use it occasionally. They use the library mainly to prepare for examinations, to report cases, to supplement lecture notes, to write assignments and to photocopy materials. Majority of the students find favour with the law library resources (75.8%). Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- \* efforts should be made to stock the library with current and relevant law materials.

- \* more effort has to be made to equip the library with internet facility.
- \* the library staff have to be given an orientation to enable them understand the nature of their services and to be courteous and friendly with the students.
- \* efforts should be made to improve the reading environment so as to make it more conducive for learning and research.

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