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Academic Library Research Support Services: A Review of Redeemer's University and the Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency's Research Activities

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Abstract

The focus of academic libraries is to support teaching, learning and research in their immediate institutions. Academic libraries support research by providing research collections, services, data literacy training and research data management. This study examined academic libraries research support and the challenges associated with the utilisation of such services by researchers in Redeemer's University and the Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency both in Nigeria. A questionnaire was used to collect data from researchers in the two institution and findings revealed the research activities of the respondents and the varying levels of engagement in different types of research support services offered by academic libraries. Findings also revealed that the researchers moderately utilised these services. Recommendations were given based on the findings of the study.

Keywords: Academic libraries, Library resources, Library services, Research support, Library usage.

Introduction

Universities are tertiary institutions established to conduct demand-driven researches; award degrees; generate and disseminate knowledge, skills and competencies at the highest educational level.; provide high-level human resources training, high-quality career counselling, lifelong learning programmes; promote scholarship; provide entrepreneurship programmes; provide

community service; promote national and international understanding and collaboration (the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2007, Draft National Policy on Education, p36). Research institutions solely engage in research to solve identified problems in society.

Research plays an important role in universities and other higher institutions of learning. Though teaching and learning are important aspects of the university system, more emphasis is on research. According to Singh (2007), universities make larger allocations for research and are being ranked on their research output. The author stressed that university staff are being assessed on the number of research papers published, and the research infrastructure is also being improved. Postgraduate population, where a research project is a requirement for the award of the degree is on the increase as well in most universities today.

As libraries situated within universities, academic libraries are expected to provide effective information services that would enhance teaching, learning, and research within the university community. Research, in particular, is crucial to the survival of universities being the fundamental process of knowledge acquisition. For teachers, to impart knowledge, they must engage in research to deepen their understanding of concepts, and for students to learn, there is also the need to conduct research, with the view of seeking and identifying solutions to problems. Research is essential within the university environment as it serves as a major determinant of the educational quality of an institution. Azad and Seyyed (2007) maintained that high research profile adds to institutional reputation, visibility, and recognition. To carry out research, there is a need for extensive literature search which brings staff and students, particularly, postgraduate students to rely on the print and electronic resources provided by the university library.

Indeed, the introduction of electronic information resources in libraries in Nigeria will facilitate access to vast collections of digital books and electronic journals for students and researchers. As libraries situated within universities, university libraries are expected to provide effective information services that would enhance teaching, learning, and research within the university community. Research, in particular, is crucial to the survival of universities being the fundamental process of knowledge acquisition. For teachers, to impart knowledge, they must engage in research to deepen their understanding of concepts, and for students to learn, there is also the need to conduct research, with the view of seeking and identifying solutions to problems. Research is essential within the university environment as it remains the only way to solve the problems in education and society

Academic library's main function is to support their parent institutions in achieving the institutional objectives. Onwudinjo (2015) posited that the main function of the academic library is to serve as an auxiliary to its parent institution in carrying out its objectives. As the name implies, academic libraries are involved in providing support for research and educational activities in universities and other academic institutions. Academic libraries' role includes content development, acquisition, technical services, provision of institutional repositories, inter-library loan, document delivery services, and so on. Academic libraries collections and services are designed to match the needs of their user that range from basic support of the curriculum to the advanced research requirements of doctoral students and faculty at major research universities. Lending credence to this, Onaolapo (2016) notes that academic libraries serve as the fulcrum which the intellectual activities of tertiary institutions hinge upon. The author

emphasised that tertiary education will be incomplete and largely defective without the existence of academic libraries stocked with relevant information resources and manned by competent professionals. Similarly, Genevieve and Lynn (2011) listed the activities of academic libraries to include:

i) management of the submission of electronic theses; ii) management of institutional repositories; iii) development of research collections; iv) training in database searching; v) provision of reading rooms for researchers away from the hurly-burly of the undergraduate library; vi) building relationships across universities' research communities, for example between offices of research and development and the committees for postgraduate studies; vii) setting up communication and collaboration tools for research communities such as wikis; viii) locating librarians' offices in the faculties to ensure maximum contact with researchers and postgraduate students; and ix) establishing online research portals, which offer seamless access to the vast array of e-resources (Hamblin 2005: 29)

The rapidly-evolving technologies, new techniques of scholarly publishing and communication calls for academic libraries to act beyond being just a repository, a collection of services, or a place for study. In response to current trends, academic libraries need to develop new resources and services while balancing core and established service areas. Similarly, academic libraries are being challenged to anticipate future needs and to develop creative and innovative initiatives to meet those needs. There is a need for an academic library to prioritise and allocate resources in line with the mission and goals of its parent institute. The objectives of this study are:

1. To examine the research activities of academic staff members at Redeemer's University

2. To identify the research support used by academic staff members at Redeemer's University in the past year.

3. To determine the adequacy of the research support services of Redeemer's university library

4. To identify the challenges associated with library services usage

5. To determine ways of solving identified problems.

Methodology

The survey method was adopted for this study primarily because it allows only a sample population to be used to represent the entire population. The target population for this study was the academic staff of Colleges of Basic Medical Sciences, Humanities, Law, Management and Social Sciences and Natural Sciences of Redeemer's University and researchers at the Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency. Seventy-eight (78) researchers participated in the survey. A questionnaire was used as an instrument for the collection of data for this study. The data collected were analysed using the descriptive statistical technique.

Results

Table 1: Current Research Project

Project	Frequency	Percentage
Masters or PhD project	29	37.2
Postdoctoral project	3	5.8
Project sponsored by University	5	9.6
Project sponsored by industry	1	1.9
Project sponsored by Government	3	5.8
Unsponsored project	37	47.4
Total	78	100

Data in Table 1 shows the categories of respondents on the current research project, 29 respondents (37.2%) were master/PhD, 3 (5.8%) were postdoctoral, 5 (9.6%) were project sponsored by the University, 1 (1.9%) were project sponsored by industry, 3 (5.8%) were Government-sponsored project while 37 (47.4%) were unsponsored project. The data reveals that out of these project conducted by the participants, unsponsored constitute the highest with 37 (47.4%) followed by the PhD/Master project with 29 (37.2%).
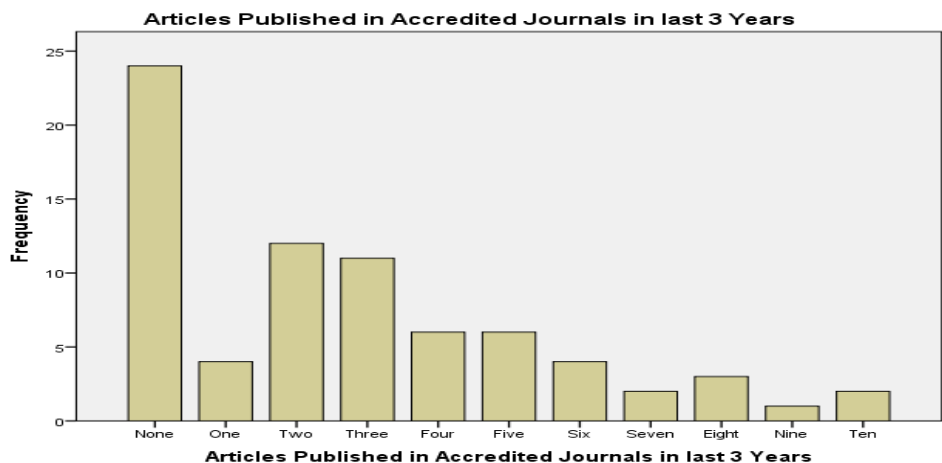
Figure 1: Research activities of researchers at Redeemer's University and the Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency, which are both in Nigeria. As revealed in the figure, a majority of the researchers sampled in the study did not publish articles in accredited journals in the last three (3) years.

Table 2: Research support services used in the past year

Services	SA/A	%	D/SD	%
Library e-resources	52	66.7	26	33.3
Library print resources	58	74.3	20	25.6

Internet service	67	85.9	11	14.1
Inter library loan	11	14.1	67	85.9
Bibliographic service	18	23.0	60	76.9
Ref/Information services	35	44.9	43	55.1
Training workshop on Database	22	28.2	56	71.8
Library quiet study area	37	47.4	41	52.2
Others	25	32.0	53	67.9

Respondents were asked to indicate the library services used in the past years. The respondents have used all the listed library support services, but the most prominently used ones are Internet services (85.9%), library print resources (74.3%) and library e-resources (66.7%) other notable resources not being used by the respondents are interlibrary loans (85.9%), training workshop on database (71.8%) and bibliographic services (76.9%). The data showed that a majority of the participants moderately used the research support services provided by the library in the past year.

Table 3: Rating of Adequacy of library research support service

Adequacy	A	%	Moderate	%	Weak	%	Non-Existence	%
Library e-resources	26	33.3	31	39.7	10	12.8	11	14.1
Library print resources	32	41.0	29	37.1	10	12.8	7	8.9
Internet service	36	46.1	24	30.8	11	14.1	7	8.9
Inter library loan	3	3.8	19	24.4	21	26.9	35	44.9
Bibliographic service	6	7.7	29	37.1	20	25.6	23	29.5
Ref/Information services	12		29	37.1	17	21.8	20	25.6
Training workshop on Database	9	11.5	17	21.8	29	37.1	23	29.5

Library quiet study area	21	26.9	25		30.0	8		10.3	24		30.8
Others	8	10.3	22		28.2	7		8.9	41		52.6

Table 3 revealed that respondents were of the view that they are satisfied with the adequacy of the following library support services such as Internet services 36 (46.1%), library print resources 32 (41.0%) and library e-resources 26 (33.3%). 31 (39.7%), 29 (37.1%), 25 (30.0%), 24 (30.8%), 22 (28.2%) and so on, opined that they are moderately satisfied with the library e-resources, library print resources, library quiet study area, and Internet service respectively. 29 (37.1%), 21 (26.9%), 20 (25.6%) and 17 (21.8%) of the respondents rated library services such as training workshop on Database, interlibrary loan, bibliographic service and ref/information service as weak while 41 (52.6%), 35 (44.9%), 24 (30.8%), 23 (29.5%), 20 (25.6%) and so on, see other library services, interlibrary loan, library quiet study area, bibliographic service, training workshop on Database etc. as not existing.

Table 4: Challenges of using library research support services

Challenges	SA/A	%	SD/D	%
Network/Databases too slow	54	49.2	24	30.8
Collection in my area not adequate	45	57.7	33	42.3
Inter library load take too long	30	38.5	48	61.5
Library lack subject Knowledge	14	17.9	64	82.1
The librarian knows very little about research	13	16.7	65	83.3
Librarian acquisition budget too small	39	50.0	38	48.7
I cannot access the library database off-campus	52	66.7	26	33.3
Lack of professional journal	36	46.2	42	53.8

No direct access to digital scholars resources	47	60.3	31	39.7

Data in Table 4 revealed the challenges of using library services and majority of the respondents agreed that network/database too slow 54 (49.2%), no access to library database outside campus 52 (66.7%), no direct access to digital scholars resources 47 (60.3%) and collection in their area not adequate to meet with their expectation with 45 (57.7%). A majority of the respondents, 65 (83.3%), 64 (82.1%), 48 (61.5%), 42 (53.8%), 38 (48.7%) on the other hand, do not see the listed challenges as obstacles to their adequate utilisation of the library research services.

Table 5: Strategies to improve library research support service

Strategies for improvement	SA/A	%	D/SD	%
Ongoing update of new information resources	68	87.2	10	12.8
Maintaining research repositories	64	82.1	14	17.9
Database training	63	80.8	15	19.2
Provision of the reading list on my topic	49	62.8	29	37.1
Provision of advice on my literature review	54	69.2	24	30.8
Advice on bibliographic referring	51	65.4	27	34.6
Advice on research topic	52	66.7	27	34.6
Advice on research proposal writing	50	64.1	28	35.9

On users suggestions on ways to improve upon the library research support services, 68(87.2%) respondents recommended update of new information resources, 64(82.1%) respondents indicated mandatory research repositories, 63(80.8%) respondents subscribed to Database training, 54 (69.2%) preferred to be advice on literature review and 49(62.8%) opine that they should be given advice on research topic, while 50 (64.1%) prefer advice on research proposal writing.

Conclusion

The findings reported in this paper have provided some insights into research support services in Redeemer's University and the Nigeria Natural Medicine Development Agency, including the challenges and solution. Academic libraries in Nigeria continue to provide research support services, therefore the need to examine their services. Academic libraries need to take an interest in all aspects of research activities by providing resources and services to support the research need of their parent institution.

Recommendations

The following are recommended based on the findings of the study:

- Academic libraries should take advantage of the opportunities presented by technological advances to improve their research support services
- Librarians should increase skills required for linking researchers to a wide range of digital resources, and helping them make choices among materials available in the public domain on the Internet
- There should be Librarian-researcher partnerships to support research.
- Universities management should take the issue of library funding as critical for the development and management of research support services.

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