

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)

Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

2021

The Relevance of Library to students of the School of Public Health of the University of Health and Allied Sciences, in Ho, Ghana

Hawa Osman Ms

University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ho, hosman@uhas.edu.gh

Selorm Adzoa Ahlijah Ms.

University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ho, sahljah@uhas.edu.gh

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



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Osman, Hawa Ms and Ahlijah, Selorm Adzoa Ms., "The Relevance of Library to students of the School of Public Health of the University of Health and Allied Sciences, in Ho, Ghana" (2021). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 4631.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/4631>

The Relevance of Library to students of the School of Public Health of the University of Health and Allied Sciences, in Ho, Ghana

Author (full name)

Affiliation

email@adress

Abstract

The library of the University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS) collects a variety of information sources and offers various services in support of teaching, learning and research to assist clients in acquiring a lifelong education. The library is accessible and its services are available to its clients at all time. This study seeks to examine the relevance of university libraries in the 21st century. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 28 level 100 students of the School of Public Health (SPH) drawn from a population of 56 students. A survey method is used for this study because of its potential for generalising findings to a large population. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) (version 21) was used to analyse the data into frequencies and percentages. Findings revealed that in the midst of a proliferation of information on the internet, many students still prefer to visit the library for information. Students use the library to update their knowledge in their field of study and to complete assignments. Students also visit the library to read newspapers, and to request reprographic services provided by the library.

1. Introduction

Academic institutions play a key role in society by preparing future generations to use the acquired knowledge to fulfil their responsibilities more effectively. The libraries of these institutions serve a variety of users such as students, faculty, administrators and staff by meeting their diverse information needs. These libraries collect a variety of information sources and offer various services in support of teaching, learning and research to assist clients in acquiring a lifelong education. These libraries also aim to be accessible and make their services available to users at all time.

The need for information is unlimited because people seek information from different sources and formats to undertake a wide variety of jobs and tasks such as decision making, discovering new phenomena, developing new techniques and technologies, and improving existing knowledge and theories. Students need information for academic work in particular. To make the acquisition of this information easy for the students, the university library acquires the information in different formats, and process the information for easy access by students.

Every university library is considered the powerhouse of information and knowledge and acts as a transformer and transmits this power to students, scholars and teachers. A university library is an intrinsic part of a university set-up. Therefore it exists to serve the objectives of its parent institution. The university library serves the curricular needs of students, faculty and staff of the parent institution and performs a major function of supporting the teaching, learning and research needs of the institution. The library also performs other services that include lending, reference, inter-library loan services and document delivery, electronic support services, reprographic services, and user education.

The university library is, very simply, a service institution. It exists in order to enable users to make the most effective use of the resources and services that it offers. Hence, the university library allows access to its collections and provides services to its users. The university library is expected to convert potential users into habitual users. To this end, one will say another objective of the university library is to increase access to resources and information, and this basic access has to be provided through the selection, acquisition and processing of resources to enable easy access in the libraries (Martey (2000). This idea is supported by Virkus and Metsar (2004), who state that the role of the academic library, amongst other things, is to broaden the resources in support of academic enquiry and discovery. University libraries by their very nature are expected to acquire, process into retrievable form, and make available much needed information to the university community and the public at large who may require this for their various teaching and research activities.

2. Problem Statement

There have been several arguments on the relevance of the library in the 21st century. In fact, some scholars have argued that the Internet has taken over from the library in providing information services. This paper therefore intends to find out whether learners use the library and what they use it for. This will help the researcher find out the relevance of the university library in the 21st century.

3. Objectives

The overall objective of the study is to find out whether university libraries are still relevant in the 21st century.

The following are the specific objectives of this study:

1. To find out whether students use the library.
2. To determine what the students use the libraries for in the 21st century.
3. To find out what students do when they visit the library.

4. Literature Review

University libraries are service institutions. They acquire, process into retrievable form, and make available the much needed information to the university community to require them for their various teaching and research activities (Virkus & Metsar, 2004). These libraries exist in order to enable users to make the most effective use of the resources and services of the library. They also allow access to their collections and provide services to the users. University libraries are expected to convert potential users into habitual users. To this end, the objective of the university library has been to increase access to resources and information, and basic access has been provided through selection, acquisition and organization of resources (Martey, 2000). However, the importance of libraries to education generally lies in the fact that they provide necessary information to lecturers, students and researchers, and community services. The significance of academic libraries lies in the fact that they are repositories of knowledge that provide the vital underpinning for national development. Different studies around the world bring to bear the importance of the library. (Akyeampong, 2013) have observed that, apart from students, professional staff from different disciplines in some Saudi universities also visits the libraries often.

Recently, more students have started using the internet for information than utilising library resources, as the internet is considered to be less complicated and more readily available – students can even get information from their mobile phones. This notwithstanding, students who are regular users of the library know that libraries have resources that are more comprehensive and scholarly than most websites provide. Several useful academic information sources provided by the library cannot necessarily be found online. Furthermore, several sources that are found online are not free to use. However, university libraries subscribe to e-journals, which provide access to scholarly articles that would not necessarily be available through other search engines.

University libraries are service institutions. They exist in order to enable users to make the most effective use of the resources and services of the library. These libraries allow access to their collections and provide services to the users. University libraries are expected to convert potential users into habitual users. To this end, the objective of the university library has been to increase access to resources and information, and basic access has been provided through selection, acquisition and organization of resources (Martey, 2000). McKinlay and Williamson (2010) on the other hand note that, access to adequate library resources is essential to the attainment of superior academic skills.

5. Methodology

The research was conducted among level 100 Public Health Nursing students of the School of Nursing and Midwifery at the University of Health and Allied Sciences, in Ho, Ghana. In order to meet the objectives of the study, a survey methodology was used. The main research instrument was a self-administered questionnaire, which consisted of structured questions. Most of the closed-ended questions were designed to elicit responses on the stated objectives. Questionnaires were distributed among 28 students after a lecture by a

faculty member who doubles as a librarian; hence, the response rate was 100%. The data was analysed using Statistical SPSS (version 21.0).

6. Findings and discussion

Each sub-question addresses the specific objective of the study.

Table 1: Library Usage by students

Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
How often do you visit the library?		
Never	0	0.0%
Twice a week	13	46.4%
Monthly	6	21.4%
Weekly	6	21.4%
Daily	3	10.7%

In a bid to find out how often students make use of the library facilities on campus, respondents were asked how frequently they use academic libraries or any other library. Table 1 shows the percentage of how often students use libraries. In total, about 95% of the respondents use libraries. However, the frequency of usage is higher among those who visit twice in a week (46.4%) as compared to those who visit the library daily (10.7%).

Table 2: The reason for visiting the library

Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
What is your reason for using the library?		
To do an assignment	4	14.3%
To read newspapers	2	7.1%
To update my knowledge	21	75.0%
To read magazines	0	0.0%
Other	1	3.6%

To find out what the purpose of visiting the library is, respondents were asked why they visit the library. It was found out that most respondents mainly go to the library to update their knowledge in their field of study. Hence, there is a 75% response rate for this activity. Aside from updating their knowledge, others visit the library to do an assignment. It is interesting to note that less than 10% of respondents visit the library to read newspapers. This shows that generally students go to the library to undertake academic activities. This is in agreement with Uzoigwe (2013) assertion that the main purpose of the academic library is to support the objectives of an academic environment in the areas of learning, teaching, research, and service.

Table 3: Functions performed at the library

Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
What do you do in the library?		
Study	12	42.9%
Sleep	0	0.0%
Check out books	1	3.6%
Return a checked-out book	0	0.0%
Research	13	46.4%
Use the electronic resources	0	0.0%
Email or chat on the internet	1	3.6%
Other (please specify)	1	3.6%

To solicit more information on the purpose of visiting the library, respondents were asked further questions on what they use the library for. This was done by asking respondents about the main activities they carry out in the library. It was found that 46.4% and 42.9% of the respondents mainly go to the library to do research and conduct their personal studies, respectively. This means that a combined 89.3% of respondents visit the library to do research and complete private studies. This is in agreement with Guskin (1996) assertion that the use of university libraries promotes active learning, thus contributing to students' ability to think critically and work well independently or in a group. An academic environment without a library is tantamount to a person without a brain.

7. Conclusion

The results of the study showed that, in the mist of proliferation of information on the internet, many students still prefer to visit the library for information. Student use the library to update their knowledge in their field of study and to do an assignment. It is interesting to note that less than 10 percent of the students visit the library to read newspapers. This means that, the library is a preferred place for academic work for most of the students. Again, most of the students go to the library to do research and private studies. This also means that the library environment is seen by students as a place for serious academic work. Indeed, the library has a serene environment for learning. The reprographic services provided by the library save students from the stress of locating such services. The study also revealed that students do not visit the library to use electronic resources. This is perhaps due to the accessibility of electronic resources.

8. Recommendations

1. The library should focus on being more resourceful to make regular library users want to return to the library more regularly and to attract new users.
2. Librarians should be more friendly, co-operative and helpful to students when they visit the library. Students easily get frustrated when they do not get the response they are looking for timeously.
3. Librarians should teach their users how to find information. Information literacy should be taught by the library in order to make all users aware of the information resources and services available, directly or through external sources at the library, and enable users to enjoy the search for information

4. Teaching staff and library staff should collaborate to ensure that library resources along with electronic resources are appropriately used by the students. Lecturers should set assignment that will encourage students to use the library. This will help the student to learn to visit the library and utilise its resources.

5. Librarians should make it a point to give library orientation at the beginning of the academic year and create awareness among students about available resources and services, and show them the benefits they could derive from using them.

REFERENCES

- Akyeampong, E. A. (2013). *The Impact of Library Usage on the Productivity of the Faculty of the University of Ghana* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Ghana).
- Guskin, A. E. (1996). Facing the future: The change process in restructuring universities. *Change: The magazine of higher learning*, 28(4), 27-37.
- Martey, A. K. (2000). Marketing products and services of academic libraries in Ghana. *Libri*, 50(4), 261-268.
- McKinlay, J., & Williamson, V. (2010). *The art of people management in libraries: tips for managing your most vital resource*. Elsevier.
- Uzoigwe, C. U. (2013). The place of academic libraries in Nigerian University Education: contributing to the Education for All initiative. *International Journal of Library and Information Science*, 5(10), 432-438.
- Virkus, S., & Metsar, S. (2004). General introduction to the role of the library for university education. *Liber Quarterly*, 14(3/4).