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AN ASSESSMENT OF USERS' PERCEPTION OF SERVICES IN BENUE STATE POLYTECHNIC LIBRARY, UGBOKOLO

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Abstract

An investigation into the perception of users of Benue State Polytechnic Library, Ugbokolo was carried out and analysed in order to ascertain the opinion of the users regarding the services provided by the polytechnic library. The study adopted survey research design and the instrument for data collection was questionnaire. Structured questionnaire were administered on one thousand (1000) library users. However, nine hundred (900) representing 90% response rate were retrieved, collated and analysed using simple descriptive statistics such as percentages. The findings revealed that some library users were not satisfied with the services. Furthermore, 12(1.33%) of the respondents indicated that the services were never satisfactory, 218(24.22%) indicated least satisfaction, 400(44.45%) expressed satisfaction with the library services, 250(27.78%) indicated that they were fairly satisfied with the services and 20(2.22%) perceived the services as very satisfactory. The study concludes that users of the polytechnic library perceive that services offered there as satisfactory. To encourage greater patronage of the services, it is recommended, among others, that the management of the polytechnic should ensure that users make input in books/journals selection. This will encourage them to visit the library.

Keywords: Users, Users' perception, library services, polytechnic libraries.

Introduction

Libraries are established, in the polytechnic system, to provide high quality information services in support of teaching and research for academic staff, as well as, acquisition of knowledge of students. The extent to which polytechnic libraries can provide services to meet the needs of their users is dependent on the availability of committed staff and suitable organisational factors. Polytechnics in Nigeria have the mandate of training and providing the middle manpower for the different sectors of the Nigerian economy. The services offered in the polytechnic libraries are therefore tailored towards the needs of their clientele who comprise of students, academic and non-academic staff.

Information, in a polytechnic library, can only be found useful if disseminated and retrieved accordingly. Similarly, a potential information user has to be aware of the availability of location or source, and the right information has to be provided to the right user at the appropriate time, in a right manner with minimal cost, which sums the basic functions of the polytechnic library. In the present day information era, the quality of information services is hinged on certain factors such as the nature of information resources, facilities and most importantly, personnel.

For a polytechnic library to effectively meet the information needs of the users, there must be a workforce that can act strongly for the attainment of organisational goals and also have a strong urge to remain loyal to the organization. In order for the library staff to put in their best, remain competent and effective in fulfilling their duties, it is the responsibility of managers of libraries to ensure that there is, in existence, a good working environment. Where authorities tend to think of their services almost exclusively, it is very likely that these services will not be effectively provided unless due recognition is given to those who manage them.

Polytechnic libraries have a role to play in providing access to knowledge and information through modern and effective means to meet the demands of the society. Polytechnic libraries like any other libraries, have regulations which guide their users, and they are meant to be adhered to strictly to ensure that library perform their duties effectively and users make use of the library. For instance, the library's opening hours must be adhered to strictly. If for any reason the library will not be open to users, on a particular day, adequate notice should be given through the Heads of Department and notice boards to keep the users abreast of the development.

Polytechnic libraries play very important roles in the sustenance and development of the academic activities of their parent institutions. They bridge the gap between the vast information

resources available in different disciplines through their services. They, arguably, remain an inseparable part of the polytechnics' setup which provide the information required to sustain and promote the intellectual activities of such institutions. This is achieved through the provision of information resources in all the programmes offered in the polytechnics. Current awareness services(CAS) and selective dissemination of information(SDI) should form part of the services offered in polytechnic libraries in Nigeria.

Some users may feel frustrated or unsatisfied if the information resources needed are not available at the time of need. Some may even walk out of the library dejected after spending a reasonable time searching for specific materials without success. The success or failure of any library can be judged by the satisfaction users derive from its services.

Background Information About Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo And Its Library

Benue State Polytechnic, Ugbokolo, according to the Student Information Handbook(2009), metamorphosed from the then Murtala College of Arts, Science and Technology which was established by Edict no.13 of 1st August, 1976 at Makurdi. The institution started off with 250 students were mainly for preparatory courses for entry into the universities in February,1977. Courses leading to the award of Ordinary and Higher National Diploma certificates began in 1977/78 academic year in Agriculture, Fine and Applied Arts, Business Administration, Accounting, Marketing and Executive Secretary ship. The Edict establishing the institution was amended on 15th December, 1982 changing the status to Benue State Polytechnic and was assented to by the then civilian Governor of Benue State, Mr. Aper Aku(late). With the new status, the institution commenced courses in Science, Technology and Engineering. Almost all the polytechnic programmes have received accreditation from the National Board for Technical Education(NBTE).

All the resources of the library were razed down in an inferno that engulfed the library in January, 1990. However, through donations, gifts and Tetfund intervention, the library now has over 13000 volumes of books, and subscribe to periodical titles. The library also enjoys regular supply of newspapers and magazines. It is, currently, at the verge of automating its resources using the Koha integrated library System. Some services offered by the library include;

a) Loans

b) Current Awareness/Selective Dissemination of information

c) Reference Services

d) Inter-library cooperation

e) Reprographics Services

f) User Education

Literature Review

Libraries, like all public and private sector services, are competing for resources hence the need to justify their expenditure and existence. Some literature exist in the area of assessment of users' perception of polytechnic library services in Nigeria but there is none with specific focus on the views of the users of Benue State Polytechnic library, Ugbokolo. According to Ogbodo(2011), polytechnic libraries are repositories of information and educational resources consciously acquired, preserved and made available for the use of the members of the polytechnic communities. They represent the polytechnic's sole instrument capable of infecting the totality of knowledge to their clients.

Measurement of library services is essential to determine the level of satisfaction of the users(Lucas,2005). Any type of service can be assessed at three levels which include; a) effectiveness   b) cost-effectiveness and c) cost-benefit. A good library service is rated based on

how satisfactory it meets the needs of users(Bamigboye(2007). Simmonds and Andaleeb(2001) argued that providing quality services in academic libraries is now a major issue among academic librarians. They see the library more in terms of the provision of and access to service quality than as just a physical place. Technology and automation have changed the way people perceive libraries. As such, the roles of libraries and librarians have also changed. Much emphases now are on the provision of good library service as more important to the users than the mere physical library building.

Cook and Heath (2001) pointed to the user as the most critical voice in assessing service quality. According to them, the library is supposed to function well across a number of dimensions, enabling them(users) to self-reliantly in their specific information-seeking behaviour and therefore, library users approach the various dimensions of services with different expectations. In the provision of services, the library employees play a major role not only in how the services are provided but also in how they are perceived by the library users. Studies, according to Otieno, et al (2015) have demonstrated that library users and they perceive and use library services are directly connected to how the staff handle the users.

Iwhiwhu and Okorodudu(2012) carried a study on users' satisfaction with library and information resources, facilities and services in Edo State Central library, Benin City, Nigeria. Two hundred (200) respondents were selected using the availability sampling technique. Questionnaire and observation were the instruments of data collection and the data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequencies and mean. The result reveal that users were not satisfied with the information resources and that they were only satisfied with three services provided in the library; which are hours of service, labelling services and bindery

services with the mean of 2.87,2.32 and 2.85 respectively. However, they were satisfied with the available furniture.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study were to;

1. Assess users' perception of the services rendered by Benue State Polytechnic Library, Ugbokolo

2. Measure the levels of satisfaction with the services of the polytechnic library

3. Determine ways of improving the services provided by the library

Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. The instrument of data collection was questionnaire and was supported by documentary sources. The justification for the choice of this method is that, it is economical and requires less time and effort in administration. The well-structured questionnaire were administered by four research assistants who were adequately briefed on how to personally administer the questionnaire to the respondents. The reason for personally administering the questionnaire to the respondents was to ensure impressive return rate. Questionnaire were distributed to the users as they entered the library and thecompleted questionnaire were collected at the library exit. This study was conducted before the advent of COVID-19.In ensuring that all the categories of users were fully represented in the sample size, random sampling technique was employed. One thousand(1000) copies of the questionnaire were distributed but nine hundred (900) representing 90% were filled and returned for analysis. Another procedure for data collection was documentary sources.

Table 1. Categories of Users

Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Certificate students	150	16.67
National Diploma students	410	45.55
Higher National Diploma students	250	27.78
Academic staff	66	7.33
Non- academic staff	24	2.67
Total	**900**	**100**

As seen in Table 1, the categories of users were 150 (or 16.6%) were certificate students, 410 (or 40.55%) were National Diploma students, 250 (or 27.7%) were Higher National Diploma students, 66 (or 7.33%) were Academic staff and 24 (or 2.67%) were Non-academic staff.

Table 2. Frequency of Use

Frequency	No. of respondents	Percentages (%)8
Regularly	250	27.78
Occasionally	180	20.00
Daily	300	33.33
Rarely	98	10.89
Never	72	8.00
Total	**900**	**100**

The frequency of library user, as represented in Table 2 indicate that 250 (or 27.78%) use the library regularly, 180 (or 20.00%) use the library occasionally, 300 (or 33.33%) visited the

library on daily basis, 98 (or 10.89%) stated that they rarely used the library and 72 (or 8.00%) never visited the library at all. It can therefore be concluded that most users visit the library daily.

Table 3: Users' Awareness of Services Rendered

Services	Responses	Percentage (%)
Loan and inter-library loan services	190	21.11
Photocopying services	160	17.78
Current Awareness(CAS) and Dissemination of Information (SDI) services	150	16.67
Reference and bibliographic services	110	12.22
Exhibition and display services	40	4.44
Library Catalogue	70	7.78
User education services	120	13.33
Abstracting and indexing services	60	6.67
Total	900	**100**

As shown in Table 3, 190 (21.11%) of the 900 respondents indicated that they were aware of loan and inter-library loan services in the library. Photocopying services accounted for 160(17.78%) users while current awareness and selective dissemination of information had 150 (16.67%) respondents. 110 (12.22%) of the respondents stated that they were aware the Reference and bibliographic services offered in the library but only 40 (4.44%) respondents were aware of the Exhibition and display services of the library. Only 70 (7.78%) of the respondents were aware of the use of the Library catalogue for library search. Users' awareness of user education services accounted for 120 (13.33%) while 60 (6.67%) respondents were aware of the

Indexing and Abstracting services of the library. From the above findings, awareness of loan and inter-library loan services ranked highest while awareness of Exhibition and display services ranked lowest.

Table 5: Users' Satisfaction with the Services Rendered

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very satisfactory	20	2.22
Satisfactory	400	44.45
Fairly Satisfactory	250	27.78
Least Satisfactory	218	24.22
Never Satisfactory	12	1.33
Total	**900**	**100**

The polytechnic library is expected to be a conducive environment for quiet study and research, where information materials are daily collected and organized for all library users. In order to gather varying opinions, the respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with the services rendered. Table 6 shows that 20 respondents representing (2.22%) stated that the services were very satisfactory, while 400 (44.45%) of therespondents were satisfied with the services of the library. 250 respondents (27.78%) were fairly satisfied with the library services. While 218 (24.22%) indicated that the services were least satisfactory, 12 (1.33%) stated that they were never satisfied with the services rendered by the polytechnic library. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that users are satisfied with the services rendered in the library.

Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it can be concluded that most users visit the polytechnic library daily and that the level of awareness of the services of the library is high, especially with reference to loans and inter-library loans. Lastly, the users perceive the library services as satisfactory. The study has been able to fill the gap identified in the literature review.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The management of the polytechnic should ensure that users make input in books/journals selection. This will encourage them to visit the library.

2. Users should be kept abreast of new collections on regular basis.

3. The access points to effective service delivery in the library, such as adequate guiding, signposting and standard catalogue provision should be properly enhanced.

4. The library management should embrace modern technologies such as electronic mails and integrated library services.

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