Full Length Research Paper

Students' perceived effectiveness in the use of library resources in Nigerian universities

Nkoyo Edem[1]*, Okon Ani[1] and Jonathan A. Ocheibi[2]

[1]University of Calabar Library, University of Calabar, Calabar-Nigeria.
[2]University Library, Benue state University, Makurdi-Nigeria.

This study was conducted on students' perceived effectiveness in the use of library resources in some selected Nigerian Universities. Questionnaire was the main instrument for collecting data. 600 copies of questionnaires were distributed, 530 were returned. The overall response was 88.3%. The responses showed that, majority of the users source their information through the catalogue indexes. While those not satisfied in their quest for information attributed them to lack of physical materials and the cumbersome library organization. Some recommendations were made for improvement, such as the role of e-library and its application, orderliness, relevance of resources and user education through orientation.

Key words: Library use, collection management, digital access, user education.

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of a university library is to support the university in areas of learning, teaching and research. The library is regarded as the "heart" of any academic institution, particularly, the university. Hence, to a large extent, the quality of a university is measured by the services provided by the library because of its unique contributions in the over-all goals of the university.

For a university to perform its myriad of functions, its library collections must not only have quality and current books/journals, but also modern information sources in electronic formats, such as e-books, e-journals, internet etc. Besides available information sources in a university library, such information sources must be easily accessed and retrieved by potential users. Consequently, the demand for effective use of library resources in university libraries calls for the need to ensure that students have effective and efficient access to these resources. The questions that arise are: how can Nigerian University Libraries ensure that students know how to use their library resources effectively? How do students' expectations change with the advent of modern information technologies? Furthermore, do students know how to search, identify, locate and select, and use library resources relevant to their learning?

In providing library/information services to the students, it is imperative for the librarians to know the information needs and seeking behaviour of students, their search skills and satisfaction levels in using library resources.

Ocheibi (2003) argues that information is a key resource that can bring about change and improvement in the society. User studies in library and information science are based on the premise that effective library services must begin with a clear understanding of the actual needs of information users.

Therefore, this study investigates the students' perceived effectiveness, their satisfaction levels, and expectations with the use of library resources for their learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The need for thorough user education programme according to Edem and Lawal (1996) is for effective use of the library resources because of exponential growth of published materials in various fields of academic studies. The growth in published materials (particularly in the science and technology) requires that scattered information in various formats be properly disseminated through user instruction. Library resources and services constitute important aspects of librarianship, and one of the ways of stimulating the active use of the resources/services is by teaching the library users, especially undergraduate students how to search for and retrieve materials in the libra-

---

*Corresponding author. E-mail: Nkyedem@yahoo.com.

ry to support learning/research. This involves teaching the students a search strategy.

A search strategy is the general plan for finding the needed information for learning, teaching and research (Meadow, 1991). This can take many forms such as, use of card/online catalogues, browsing, and assistance from librarian (library staff) and through the use of computers, the Internet and different search engines. All these forms of search strategies could be properly achieved through "user education programme".

Mews (1972) defines user education as "instructions given to users to help them make the best use of the library". These are of two types: library orientation and bibliographic instructions, as well as general familiarization with the organization of these resources in the library. Anwar (1981) reports that, the ASLIB conference of 1926 was the first forum to examine user education critically as a conference theme. By 1976, an impressive bibliography of 1800 items on the topic has been published. In spite of this, most library users are still unable to make effective and efficient use of available resources in Nigerian university libraries. However, Lowell (1976) is of the view that, proper user studies may to some extent produce data for planning effective use of library resources. After an analysis of user studies, Zweizig (1977) proposes that measuring user satisfaction is probably a better alternative than measuring the benefits of materials availability and information obtained. This user studies will help in enhancing users' effectiveness of searching, identifying, locating and selecting materials in the library for their learning/research.

In Nigeria, Soyinka (1976) examines the under-graduates' library orientation at the University of Ibadan Library and recommends that librarians should work out among themselves co-operative means of tackling the problem of library orientation and instruction along the lines similar to the LOEX scheme in America. She recommends that Committee of University Librarians in Nigerian Universities (CULNU), should work through the Committee of Vice Chancellors (CVC), and make the establishment of General Studies (GSS) programmes which will incorporate "use of the library" formal, compulsory, credit-earning and examinable courses in library instruction and orientation in Nigerian universities. Edem and Lawal (1996) in their studies postulate an aggressive user education to enhance students' greater utilization of information sources that are available in the library. In a study on user education in academic libraries in southern Africa, Fidzani (1995) posits that user education programmes should aimed at sensitizing users to the value of online public access catalogue (OPAC) and CD-ROMS so that they can learn to appreciate and use the online system. He further explained that instruction in the use of OPAC forms a basic step to searching a computerized database, which might lead to more sophisticated searches like searching other databases thus being exposed to more information.

Aguolu (1982) reveals that the Nigerian University Librarians seems to be preoccupied with basic library duties like acquisition, processing and preservation without giving the proper services on how to use the library by the students for their learning/research. Although Unomah (1987) explores the problems facing user education to include: scarcity of funds, lack of professional librarians, lack of faculty cooperation, students' inability to use the resources of the library, over emphasis on bibliographic instruction, and poor integration of user education course period. These problems if attended to may probably meet the students' expectations which will help them to become more effective in using the library resources for their successful university education.

Osinulu (1998) examines patterns of use in a university library in Nigeria by analyzing user records and data, which show low use of the library due to lack of awareness. The author recommends library reference and instruction, publication of users' guides, and teaching library use in the general studies programme. Ampka's (2000) study on the use of University of Maiduguri Library found out that majority of students did not use the library effectively due to lack of interest on the use of library catalogues. Ugah (2007) evaluated the use of University libraries with particular reference to Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Nigeria and found out that both students and staff use the library, although students constitute the majority of the users. The findings also showed that nearly three quarters of users browse the shelves to locate materials, which shows their inability to use the library catalogue. He recommended intensive library orientation on the use of the catalogue as an effective tool for information retrieval. Oyesiku and Oduwele (2004) focus on academic library use. The investigation reveals that the students used the library mostly during examinations and to do class assignments. The study further revealed that collections were inadequate to meet users' demands. The study recommends acquisition of current materials and proper organization of such materials for effective information retrieval.

Relatively, organization and utilization of information sources are key factors in the provision of quality services in different types of libraries. If the resources are not well organized, it could hinder students' effectiveness in using the available resources in the library for their learning/research. Hence, Edem and Edem (2002) confirm that quality services to a large extent depend on the organizational patterns adopted by the library. The main goals of this managerial function are to acquire all relevant resources and make them available to the users for ease of access and retrieval. This has actually received the attention of library scholars and practitioners as documented in the library science literature by (Aboyade 1983; Aiyepeku, 1989 and Aluri, 1993). This study is therefore intended to help the students to improve their search strategy in the use of library resources and make effective use of available library resources for their learning/research.

Table 1. Distribution of surveyed library users.

University	Library users	Respondents	Percentage (%)
University of Cabalar	340	300	88.2
University of Uyo	260	230	88.5
TOTAL	**600**	**530**	**88.3**

Table 2. Indices for users' satisfaction in information searching in the two university libraries.

S/N	Item	Unical library	Uniuyo library
		Satisfied frequency (%)	Satisfied frequency (%)
1	Search	124(41.3)	90(39.1)
2	Identifying	68(22.7)	65(28.3)
3	Locating	63(21.0)	45(19.6)
4	Selecting	45(15.0)	30(13.0)
	TOTAL	**300**	**230**

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study is set out:

- To identify students' effectiveness in searching, identifying, locating and selecting and using library resources for their learning/research.
- To assess students' reasons for satisfaction or dissatisfaction in their search for information sources in the library; and
- To analyze how students need to improve their effectiveness in the use of library resources for their learning/research.

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Data for the study were collected through questionnaire survey from two Universities: University of Calabar, Cross River State and University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State in South- South zone of Nigeria. The designed questionnaires was pre-tested and validated in the University of Calabar Library; after which 600 copies of the questionnaires were then distributed to final year library users in the two Universities respectively. Respondents, who are regular users of the two libraries under study, were requested to complete the questionnaire within a week.

A total of 530 (88.3%) of the questionnaires were completed and used for data analysis While 70 (11.7%) were not returned at all (Table 1). Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and percentage tabulation. The study was conducted during the 2003/2004 academic session. The results are presented below:

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The respondents of Unical Library were asked to choose their level of satisfaction in different aspects of the use of library resources as shown in Table 2, Figures 1a and b). The results show overall satisfaction of users in the University of Calabar as follows; success in searching 124 (41.3%); identifying library resources with 67(22.7%) and
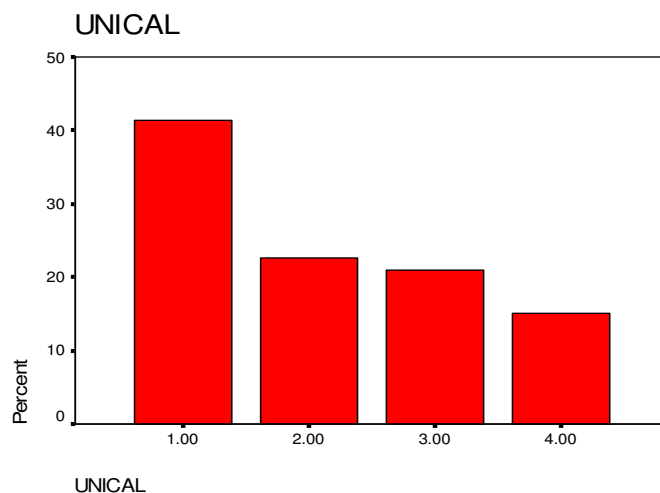
UNICAL

Figure 1(a). UNICAL.

locating 63(21.0%) selecting of information sources 45 (15.0%). Similarly, statistics recorded Table 2 reveal that University of Uyo respondents recorded as follows: success in searching 90(39.1%), identifying 65(28.3%); locating 45(19.6%) and selecting information sources 30 (13.0%).

From the above results, it is obvious that the students from University of Calabar were satisfied in searching, identifying, locating and selecting library materials for their learning/research than the students of University of Uyo. It could therefore be deduced that, there is effective user education in the University of Calabar for the library users than as obtained in University of Uyo.

Edem and Edem (2002) had in a similar result confirmed that the study of organization and Utilization of reference sources in libraries enhances the promotion of searching and locating information sources through the teaching of library instruction amongst other methods as be-

Table 3. Reasons for satisfaction.

	Reasons satisfaction	Unical library	Uniuyo library
		% Response	% Response
1.	Was able to use the catalogue to search	120(40.0)	100(43.4)
2.	Satisfied with information sources found	80(26.7)	65(28.3)
3.	Located materials Needed	60(20.0)	42(18.3)
4.	Received help from Staff	40(13.3)	23(10.0)
	TOTAL	**300**	**230**

Table 4. Reasons for dissatisfaction.

S/N	Item	Unical library	Uniuyo library
	Reasons for dissatisfaction	Frequency (%)	Frequency (%)
1	Lack of computer facilities	88(29.3)	66(28.7)
2	Unable to find enough information in the catalogue index	63(21.0)	58(25.2)
3	Inadequate current books in the Library	52(17.3)	40(17.4)
4	Inadequate current journals in the Library	50(16.7)	31(13.5)
5	Inadequate staff to handle views requests	33(11.0)	25(10.9)
6	Search processes cumbersome due to disorganized holdings	14(4.7)	10(4.3)
	TOTAL	**300(100.0)**	**230(100.0)**
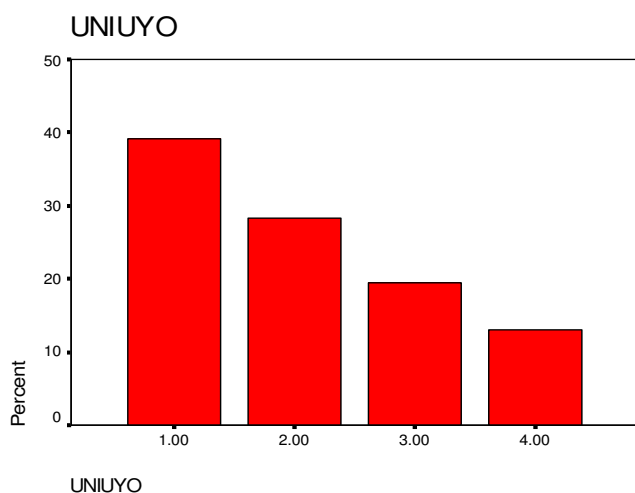
Figure 1(b). UNIUYO.

ing taught in the Universities to first year students as a sine qua non for effective use of resources in our libraries.

The results in Table 3 show the highest response rate of 120 (40.0%) from University of Calabar Library which indicate that the students are able to use the card catalogue to search for materials, while that of University of Uyo Library received 100(43.4%) responses.

This result agrees with that of Edem and Lawal (1996) and Fidzani (1995) earlier finding that thorough user edu-

cation programme really helped the final year students to use the card catalogue and OPAC for retrieving information sources for their research work. All the other reasons for satisfaction also contributed to the students' ability to search for materials with ease.

The major reasons given by respondents in the two universities for dissatisfaction as shown in Table 4 are explicit, these ranges from lack of ICT driven materials to search procedures caused by the disorganized holdings of the libraries.

Expectations to become effective users of the library

The respondents indicated their expectations to become effective users as shown in Table 5.

In a ranking order, the expectation of users, librarians today are finding it necessary to provide ever-increasing and varied services and in support of distance education in our academic institutions, satisfying a whole type of library users: the faceless patron. Library foot traffic is declining, but the expectation of users and libraries are constantly increasing as indicated in Table 5.

The finding of Aboyade (1988); Ayipeku (1989); Aluri (1993); Fidzani (1995) and Edem and Edem (2002) is instructive that for any University library to be effective, patrons are not only seeking to keep abreast of new technological advances, but also are looking for highly trained and self motivated professionals who are flexible, enthusiastic, have good stress management skills, service oriented and have excellent interpersonal skills.

Table 5. Expectations to become effective users of the library materials.

S/N	Item	Response (%)
1.	Providing ICT Component	145(27.4)
2.	Updating Library holding	130(24.5)
3.	Regular training of staff to handle Users request	92(17.4)
4.	Teaching the use of Library in University curriculum	79(13.4)
5.	Promoting Library tours	50(9.4)
6	Provision of other Service of photocopies	42(7.9)
	Total	**530 (100.0)**

Recommendation and Conclusion

From the research findings students need to be reminded from time to time of their library use instructions, organize frequent library tours to update their knowledge and also to provide assistance in their research work. Although all the respondents indicated a fair knowledge to their search work, identification, locating and selecting information sources, they still need to strengthen their capability in information retrieval process by updating their knowledge of user education. From the foregoing, the paper strongly recommends aggressive user education and computerization of the library as well as acquisition of current information resources for proper and effective services. Recommendations are also made to the library management that before planning programs and services in each academic session, proper library orientation programme must be put on the priority list for the first year students as well as guide tours of library facilities/ materials for the final year students before embarking on any research work.

REFERENCES

Aboyade BO (1983). Keynote address on Reference Services in Nigerian Libraries Today. Lagos Librarian 10(2): 7-15.

Aguolu CC (1982). The education of library users in Nigeria Universities Educ. Libr. Bull. 25(3): 20 – 29.

Aiyepeku WO (1989). The perception and Utilization of Information by Policy- makers in Nigeria. Lagos: National Library of Nigeria pp.44-49.

Aluri R (1993).Improving Reference: The Case for Using a Continuous Quality Improved Method. Res. Q. 33(2).

Ampka SA (2000). Students' Use of Maiduguri Library: An Evaluative Study. Gateway Libr. J. 2-3: 70-80.

Anwar MA (1981). Education of the User of Information. Int. Libr. Rev. (13): 365-381.

Edem N, Lawal OO (1996). Towards improved user education programme in Nigerian University libraries. Afr. J. Libr., Archival Info. Sci. 6(1): 31-34.

Edem US, Edem NB (2002). Organization and Utilization of Reference Resources in the University of Calabar Library. Afr. J. Educ. Info. Manag. 4(1): 95 – 96.

Fidzani BT (1995). User Education in Academic libraries: a study of Trends and Developments in Southern Africa. http://www.ifla.or-g/iv/ifla61/61-fidb.htm

Meadow CT (1991). Text Information Retrieval System. New York: Academic Press: Inc.

Mews HC (1972). Readers' instruction in College and Universities: An introductory handbook. London: Bindley.

Ocheibi JA (2003) information needs and information gathering behaviour of medical doctors in Maiduguri – Nigeria, J. Educ. Media Libr. Sci. 40(3): 417 – 427.

Osinulu LF (1998). Library Use in ogun State University: Gateway Libr. J., 1(20): 81-87.

Oyesiku FA, Oduwole AA (2004).Use of an Academic Library: A Survey on the Olabisi Onabanjo University Libraries. Lagos J. Libr. Info. Sci., 2(2): 96-101.

Soyinka L (1976). Undergraduate library orientation at the Ibadan University library. Niger. Libr. 12(1) p. 10.

Ugah D (2007). Evaluating the Use of University Libraries in Nigerria: A Case Study of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/ugah2.htm.

Unomah JC (1987). User education in academic libraries: the Nigerian Situation. J. Libr. info. Sci. 13(2): 111-132.

Zweizig D (1977). Measuring library use. Drexel Libr. Q. 12: 2-15.