

Effectiveness of Library Service and Resources in an African University

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Abstract

This paper examined the effectiveness of library service and resources in an African university. To elicit the necessary information, a questionnaire was randomly administered to 500 students from 100 – 500 level of Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, Oyo-state, Nigeria. A response rate of 100% was achieved. Using frequency and simple percentage to analyze the data, the results showed that majority 73% of the respondents find the university library service effective and (53%) agree that its resources are adequate for their various information needs. The study concluded by noting that there were inadequacies which emanated from short fall in acquisitions, but the library resources provided were easily accessible and fairly adequate to meet the information needs of the users. Based on the findings, recommendations were made in order to boost the library services and resources provided to meet more of the demands of the teeming population of users.

Keywords: Effectiveness of library, Library service, Library resources, African university

Introduction

The primary purpose of any library is to provide the information needs of its users. Likewise, all authorized users of academic and research libraries have a right to expect library services that commensurate with their needs, provided by competent librarians and founded on adequate collections which are easily available and accessible.

In the academic community, libraries are vital not only to continuing education and self development, but also to research activities. They are indispensable because they are the nerve centre of all teaching, learning and research activities in a university. The fact that academic libraries occupy a paramount place in the life of their parent institutions has widely been discussed in many library literatures. Aloh (1988) described university libraries as the heart of the society, the only effective repository of racial memory.

Libraries in universities are established to help in achieving their primary objectives. According to Nok (2006), university libraries have derived their objectives to include provision of materials for undergraduate instruction, term papers and projects, support of faculty, external and collaborative research, personal development, leisure and cooperation with other academic libraries with the view to developing a network of academic library resources that are at the disposal of all scholars. Therefore, services provided by the academic libraries must be planned in relation to the other faculties in the community they serve.

The quality and effectiveness of academic libraries is connected with services, products, as well as staff, facilities and space (Pindlowa, 2002). Ugah (2011) is also of the opinion that quality in the content of a library is often treated as the quality of service and the quality of service which also affects the effectiveness of the library is important for each library to survive.

This study therefore investigated the effectiveness of library services and resources in an African university: problems and prospects bearing in mind that the provision of effective service is an essential part of libraries which should not be taken for granted.

Literature review

The philosophy of librarianship according to Adeoye and Popoola (2011) is based on the concept of effective library services and provision of relevant resources to users. Libraries need to add value to their services because of competing online information now readily available. To provide effective services, libraries must continue to undertake the acquisition, storage, and dissemination of information in all forms to users in order to satisfy their needs. Moreover, it is important that libraries organize and make all forms of recorded knowledge convenient and easy to use. Libraries must endeavor to interpret and provide adequate guides to the use of its resources to enable as many readers as possible to use the record and resources that are available to meet their information needs. The library needs a supply of sufficient resources and staff in order to process information delivery quickly and to make it a dependable source for users most of the time. Lending credence to this, Adeoye and Popoola (2011) stated that learners must have access to necessary information materials and resources for learning to take place. University libraries therefore have to provide the available learning resources continually in order to be able to provide effective service to their numerous users.

The effectiveness of library services and resources is important and vital to university libraries. In the

opinion of Onuoha, Omokoje and Bamidele (2013), the effectiveness of the library as a whole can be inferred from its service provision. Harvey (2004) shares a similar opinion but adds that it is the extent to which an activity fulfils its intended purpose or function. A well stocked and efficient library act as eyes or pathfinder for researchers and provide them the inspiration to venture into new areas of research (Leckie, Pettigrew and Sylvain, 1996).

Libraries of today are in a situation where they face competition from other information providers. Information Communication Technology (ICT) has bought a revolution to search for new information (Barik, 2013) and according to Pool (2009), ICT does not change information that users need, but changes the way in which it is being delivered. Thus, libraries can only distinguish themselves through effective service provision and availability of adequate, qualitative and updated resources. According to Lancaster (1993), the overall criterion of effectiveness is the proportion of user demands that are satisfied bearing in mind that satisfaction is related to personal needs. Effectiveness of library service is often associated with judgment on how well a service is performing by the direct user of that service. Therefore, accessing effectiveness of service from users' perspective is important to the university library. Nwalo (1997) in his contribution to the subject also agreed that library effectiveness should be measured in terms of the satisfaction expressed by library users. Buckland (1999) submits that considering the effectiveness of library services in the absence of the user would have little meaning and less benefit. Each user evaluates the quality of services received and decides when there will be further interaction with that organization, library inclusive (Altman and Hernon, 1998). In effect, library service can best be judged in terms of personal satisfaction of the user.

Besides, effective library service and resources should be timely in delivery, meet specific needs, be easy to understand/use and be delivered by courteous and knowledgeable staff. Poll (2004) presents an interesting example of quality of service and resources from the perspective of three groups of stakeholders: users, financing authorities and library staff. She pointed out that not all these issues may be aspects of quality, but they are important for maintaining quality and effectiveness.

One primary objective of a library according to Ajala (1997) is to maximize the intensive use of its resources and services. Oyewumi (2006) is also of the opinion that when a library is provided in a school, the extent to which it is utilised is very important. It is therefore necessary for libraries to examine the effectiveness of service and resources provided to their users most especially in today's changing environment and information communication technology (ICT). Lending credence to this, Webb, Gannon-Leary and Bent (2007) stated that libraries need to take stock of where they are now, list the services and resources they currently provide, ask users what they want from the library and combine the results of these investigation with new ideas and developments in order to provide a comprehensive and effective service and resources to users in order to meet their information needs.

The ease with which the user gets their required materials in the library is a reflection of how adequate the resources of the library are to their needs. In meeting the user's needs, the personal public relation of the staff is a crucial factor, which must not be overlooked. Evidence of willingness to help, and ability to meet personal needs are part of parameters that determines if the user is satisfied. The library therefore needs to satisfy its users and to prove to its funding and accrediting bodies that it is worth investment.

Statement of the problem

The need for a study of this nature is based on the increase in the admission of students in universities in Nigeria which has led to pressure on library service and resources. From close observation, the university library is faced with significant gaps in the existing collection and the increasing output of new literature. Moreover, it seems there is inadequate provision of resources in the university library to cope with the demands of users.

University libraries in Nigeria hardly acquire enough materials due to lack of fund; thus, they have had to fall back on books and journals and other library materials supplied through the intervention of the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND) in Nigeria and other means. It is also worrisome that this attitude can affect the quality of service and resources provided by university libraries to their teeming users and cause a decline in their academic performance and research. This therefore prompted an investigation into the effectiveness of library service and resources in an African university: problems and prospects

Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- a. Examine the resources and services available in the university library.
- b. Find out the level of utilisation and satisfaction of available resources by the user.
- c. Find out the level of satisfaction of service provided by the university library.
- d. Find out the hindrances and how to improve on the effectiveness of service provided in the library.

Methodology

The data for this study were collected by administering questionnaire to 500 students from all levels (100 – 500) of the university. The selection was done from statistics of readers that use the library per week between the hours of 10.00a.m and 12.00 noon from Monday to Friday, before examination period. This is usually the peak periods of the university library. The total number of users between these periods for five days totalled 2566. An average of 500 users cutting across 100 – 500 levels was therefore captured. The questionnaire was administered in five different reading rooms of the university library with the help of five research assistants and collected on the spot.

Findings and Discussion

All copies of the questionnaires were returned and analysed representing a response rate of 100%. This is an indication that students know the importance of library resources and effectiveness of the service provided by university library on their academic work.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by gender

Items	Respondents	Percentage
Male	298	60
Female	202	40
Total	500	100

The findings in Table 1 revealed that 60% were male respondents while 40% were female. This implies that the genders were fairly represented.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents by age

Age	Respondents	Percentage
16-25	365	73
26-35	78	16
36 and above	57	11
Total	500	100

Table 2 presents the age distribution of respondents. Majority (73%) of the respondents were between the ages of 16 - 25. This indicates that most of the respondents are young adults who are in their mentally active stage and can still read intensively.

Table 3: Frequency of use of library

Frequency	No of Respondents	%
Everyday	358	72
Twice a week	10	2
Thrice a week	44	9
Occasionally	8	1
Others	80	16
Total	500	100

Table 3 revealed that 72% use the library daily, 2% use it twice a week, 9% use it thrice a week, while 1% use it occasionally as they dim fit. 16% were undecided about when they use the library.

Table 4: Materials assessed by users

Items	No of respondents	%
Library textbooks	106	21
Reference materials	15	3
Periodicals/Journals	26	5
Electronic resources	55	11
Entire collection	298	60
Total	500	100

The findings in Table 4 showed that 298 (60%) of the respondents which is a large percentage indicated that they make use of the libraries entire collection for their information needs, 106 (21%) use library textbooks, 55 (11%) use electronic resources, 26 (5%) consult periodicals/journals, while 15 (3%) indicated that they use reference materials only. The result shows that users rely more on the libraries entire collection probably because information comes in different format.

Table 5: Effectiveness of library services provided

Items	No of respondents	Percentage
Very effective	364	73
Effective	106	21
Ineffective	20	4
Very ineffective	5	1
Others (Specify)	5	1

Table 5 revealed that 73% of the respondents indicated that the service provided by the library is very effective, 21% stated that it is effective, 4% indicated that it is ineffective, while 1% indicated that the service provided is very ineffective. The remaining 1% did not specify.

Table 6: Difficulties encountered in the usage of the library

Items	Respondents	Percentage
I often do not find sitting space to read	85	17
I often find the information I need	258	52
I often do not get the opportunity of using the Internet/virtual library	52	10
The library environment is not conducive	20	4
The hardcopies of newspapers and magazines provided are inadequate	70	14
Others (Specify)	15	3
Total	500	100

Table 6 shows that 52% of the respondents indicated that they often find the information they need in the library, 17% stated that they do not find sitting space, 14% find hardcopies of newspapers and magazines provided inadequate, 10% responded that they do not often get the opportunity of using the Internet/virtual library, 4% are of the opinion that the library environment is not conducive, while just 3% specified some other difficulties encountered such as too much movement around the reading rooms by users and that the closing time of the library at 6.00pm is too early.

Table 7: Adequacy of library resources

Items	Strongly Disagree	%	Disagree	%	Agree	%	Strongly Agree	%
Print resources are adequate	0	0	9	2	264	53	16	3
E- resources are adequate	0	0	5	1	90	18	10	2
IT resources are adequate	0	0	6	1	95	19	5	1
Others (Specify)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The findings in Table 7 reveals that 53% of the respondents which is the majority agree that print resources provided in the library are adequate while just 2% disagree. 18% agree that e-resources are adequate while 19% agree that IT resources are adequate.

Conclusion

The findings of this study therefore show that if library service and resources are adequate and readily available, it would result to increase in use. If there is improvement in the response to users' needs, the end result will thus be an increase in the library's role in the pursuit of user's educational goals, research and needs. In developing nations like Nigeria, where book buying is a luxury because of the prohibitive cost and limited book markets, it becomes a matter of priority for the library to provide effective service and resources to its numerous users. The library should not only build adequate and balanced functional resources, but also provide access to the resources. The more detailed the assistance given, the more humbly it is given, the more certain will be the satisfaction of the user and an increase in library use.

In providing effective service and resources in university libraries, the librarian should cater for varying level of users within and outside the university. Library resources need to be used adequately in order to justify the huge amount invested in them.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the findings of the results:

- The university library should attract users by ensuring that current library materials are acquired, stocked and made available for information needs of its users. In addition, books, journals and other

library materials should be well arranged on the shelves, and each shelf well labeled for easy retrieval and accessibility.

- Library services should be given more attention. This would promote effective library service and create users' awareness to services available in the library.
- There is a need for a more and better service and larger library resources.
- Better access must be provided; this may be achieved through increased awareness and exposure to library resources.
- An enabling library environment should be provided for library personnel in order to make them to be alive to their professional responsibilities from time to time.

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