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6-1-2023

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Joshua Nduka, Chinyere and Wiche, Humphrey I. Dr., "Provision of Reference Services and Use of Information Resources by Undergraduate Students in University Libraries in Bayelsa State" (2023). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 7823.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/7823>

**Provision of Reference Services and Use of Information Resources by Undergraduate
Students in University Libraries in Bayelsa State**

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Abstract

This study investigated the provision of reference services and use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa state, Nigeria. The study used a correlational survey research methodology, and the instrument for gathering data was a questionnaire. 17451 undergraduate students from the four universities in Bayelsa State made up the study's population, with a sample size of 349 representing 20% of the total population. 349 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 346 were retrieved and found usable. Data were analyzed with frequency count, simple percentages, mean, and standard deviation while Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significant level. The study's findings showed a strong positive link between responding to reference requests and undergraduate students' use of library information resources at universities in Bayelsa State ($r = .598$; $p < 0.05$). The usage of library information resources by students is significantly positively correlated with the referral service ($r = .168$; $p < 0.05$), user education ($r = .482$; $p < 0.05$), and current awareness services ($r = .236$; $p < 0.05$). Undergraduate students' use of library information resources at universities in Bayelsa State is significantly positively correlated with selective information distribution ($r = .127$; $p < 0.05$). According to the study's findings, reference services provided by librarians are still essential for university libraries to achieve their primary goals. The study concluded that librarians and libraries urgently need to prioritize offering reference services to undergraduates in light of their favorable impact on library use.

Keywords: Provision of reference services, Use, Information resources, Undergraduate students, University libraries

Introduction

The purpose of university libraries is to choose, gather, arrange, and provide information resources to users within the university community. By acquiring and maintaining information resources in all formats, including print and electronic ones, and making them available to users, including undergraduates, university libraries achieve their role of supporting educational objectives. For undergraduate students to succeed academically, university libraries are essential since they house a wide range of resources from which they can draw knowledge that goes beyond what their lecturers can transmit in the classroom (Nwosu & Echem, 2018). To succeed in their varied courses of study, undergraduates pursuing bachelor's degrees in universities rely on current and pertinent knowledge. Undergraduates are required to read more, find, and utilise pertinent information for class assignments, seminars, term papers, presentations, workshops, and projects in addition to the traditional classroom setting. This is why undergraduates frequently use and rely on library information resources.

Information resources include books, documents, and other items that contain information that the library has acquired and made available to meet the various information needs of all users. According to Nwosu & Echem (2018), information resources are the documents that hold the plethora of information that undergraduates need to expand and hone their knowledge. Users often have access to information resources in the form of printed and electronic content (Omehia & Okwu, 2020). In the past, libraries mostly used printed materials, such as books and periodicals, to satisfy their patrons' information demands. The proliferation of electronic resources within libraries has, however, significantly changed as a result of the development of information technology (Ogunbodede & Oribhabor, 2022). Technology developments and the expanding availability of digital information have been the driving forces behind this transition. In the digital age, university libraries should not only focus on their traditional responsibilities of making books and other print materials accessible but also on providing remote access to electronic resources (Adeeko & Adetimirin, 2021). This implies that university libraries can no longer successfully serve consumers by relying solely on print information resources without utilizing electronic information resources.

In Nigeria, university libraries have worked very hard to make information resources available that are pertinent to the requirements of undergraduate students. These initiatives involve giving people access to both print and electronic resources, including publications like books, journals, databases, and other information sources. According to Nwabueze & Urhiewhu (2015), there are still issues that prevent undergraduate students from using information resources effectively. These difficulties may be related to undergraduates' limited understanding of how to use various library information

resources, including how to browse, access, and utilise them. The inability of undergraduate students to access and use internet resources due to their lack of digital literacy could be another obstacle. However, the current overabundance of information resources in a variety of media has raised the need for students to be guided and supported to be able to use library information resources appropriately. This is in line with Onifade's (2013) argument that libraries must not just supply resources but also make sure that their users are using them wisely if they are to contribute to the advancement of knowledge. Effective reference services that will help undergraduate students' academic goals are increasingly necessary as the demand for high-quality education rises. The training of librarians is another area where university libraries must make invest if they want to improve their ability to provide students with quality reference services.

Since one of the most crucial library services that improve accessibility and use of information resources is the provision of reference services, there is a tight connection between this and the use of information resources by students. According to Obi (2021), reference services are particularly important in libraries since they give undergraduates access to information that will increase their awareness of and familiarity with the library's resources. According to Ifidion, referenced in Kudu (2011), reference service refers to the individualized support that librarians provide to readers who are looking for information. This entails not only finding the sources of the necessary information but also finding the information and separating the pertinent information from the rest of the available data. Reference services are created to help students access and utilize information resources efficiently. These services include guiding students through databases and search engines, locating pertinent materials, and assessing the reliability and applicability of sources. Students are better able to access and utilise information sources that support their academic goals when they obtain efficient reference services.

In university libraries, reference services are provided in the form of user education, referral services, abstracting and indexing services, selective dissemination of information (SDI), and services for current awareness. In addition, digital reference is a part of reference services, particularly in 21st-century libraries where the majority of patrons and resources are electronic form. According to Vijayakumar (2011), who confirmed that reference services in the library are not limited to the ones described above. For instance, a reference librarian may send an undergraduate student an email with journal articles or substitutes to meet that student's information demands. According to this study, the primary indications of the availability of reference services in university libraries are responding to reference requests, referral services, user education, current awareness services, and the selective broadcast of information.

As a result, it is the responsibility of librarians in university libraries to implement strategies to meet the actual information needs of undergraduates through the provision of reference services like responding to reference questions, user education, current awareness services, and selective information dissemination. Understanding resource usage and the many ways to access information in the library is crucial for undergraduates to make optimal use of the university libraries' information resources. This is crucial because the library's information resources are frequently spread over a variety of sources, making it possible that undergraduate students will need the librarian's aid to use them effectively during their studies. If the reference librarian can answer their questions, undergraduates who frequently make up a critical mass of library visitors in universities will always find the library to be helpful. This study is important because it will show how reference services may affect how undergraduates use information resources in university libraries in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the relationship between the provision of reference services and the use of information resources by undergraduates in university libraries in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

- To determine the relationship between answering reference queries and the use of information resources by undergraduate students
- To ascertain the relationship between referral service and the use of information resources by undergraduate students
- To find out the relationship between user education and the use of library information resources by undergraduate students
- To examine the relationship between current awareness services and the use of library information resources by undergraduate students
- To investigate the relationship between the selective dissemination of information and the use of library information resources by undergraduate students

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

- What is the relationship between answering reference queries and the use of information resources by undergraduate students?
- What is the relationship between referral services and the use of information resources by undergraduate students?
- What is the relationship between user education and the use of library information resources

by undergraduate students?

- What is the relationship between current awareness services and the use of library information resources by undergraduate students?
- What is the relationship between the selective dissemination of information and the use of library information resources by undergraduate students?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses will be tested in this study at 0.05 level of significance:

- There is no significant relationship between answering reference queries and the use of information resources by undergraduate students
- There is no significant relationship between referral services and the use of information resources by undergraduate students
- There is no significant relationship between user education and the use of library information resources by undergraduate students
- There is no significant relationship between current awareness services and the use of library information resources by undergraduate students
- There is no significant relationship between the selective dissemination of information and the use of library information resources by undergraduate students

Literature Review

Answering reference questions and use of library information resources

Studies have demonstrated that properly responding to reference queries from students has increased the use of library information services. For instance, Adam (2017) studied the effects of prompt query responses on the satisfaction of 120 undergraduates using the library at Northwest University in Kano, Nigeria. The study used a cross-sectional survey research design and a questionnaire to collect data. The findings revealed that while 30% of respondents were "quite satisfied," 44% of respondents were "very satisfied" with the library reference services, which included current awareness and selective dissemination services.

Referral Services and use of library information resources

Adeeko and Adetimirin (2021) looked into how much 797 undergraduates used the reference and referral services when looking for information in the library in North Central, Nigeria. A questionnaire was used as the data collection tool in the study, which used a descriptive research design. The majority of undergraduates 294(41%) use the library's books regularly for a variety of academic tasks, but 215(30%) of those polled said they never utilize the reference

or referral services. This may be because books are simple to find in libraries without a librarian's assistance. The fact that referral services aren't being used could be attributed to the library's acquisition of appropriate and pertinent user resources. This demonstrates that students can use the library's information resources efficiently as long as they can identify their information needs with a librarian's assistance. According to Okoroma (2014), referral services can guarantee increased access to pertinent, trustworthy, and useable information and may also improve any likelihood that the proper information will be delivered to the right user both inside and outside the library. The usage of referral services by undergraduates demonstrates their dedication to access and guarantees that the library will meet their information needs through a variety of reference services.

User Education and use of information resources

Nkamnebe et al. (2014) looked at the connection between information resource use and user education among 276 undergraduates at Paul University in Awka, Nigeria. According to the study, the majority of undergraduate students acknowledged that user education services make it easier to access information resources in libraries. Ajala & Adetimirin (2018) performed research on the impact of user education and the use of online databases by students at four South West Nigerian universities. The study used a questionnaire as its primary data gathering tool and a descriptive research methodology. The findings revealed a substantial correlation between user education and the use of online databases in the universities of Afe Babalola, Babcock, and Redeemers. To correlate students' usage of information resources in private university libraries in Edo State, Nigeria, Adebayo-Atchimi et al. (2022) conducted a study on library user education. 7400 undergraduate students from the three private universities in Edo State made up the study's sample. The results indicate a substantial correlation between library user education and students' usage of information resources in Edo State's private university libraries. This suggests that library user education improved students' utilization of the libraries' informational resources.

Current Awareness Services and use of library information resources

Kpakiko et al. (2018) looked at the three university libraries in North West, Nigeria that patrons used the most for current awareness resources. In three university libraries, the study used a survey research design with a total sample size of 150 customers. The results showed that the list of new arrivals is the most frequently used resource, followed by shelf displays, library bulletin newspapers, email, and bulletin board services. To understand how current awareness services could affect how people use information resources, Ogugua et al. (2019) conducted a study. 394 registered library users from three university libraries in the Nigerian states of Abia and Imo were chosen for the study

using the census approach. The results demonstrated a significant correlation between the use of library resources and current awareness services. This suggests that current awareness, such as the announcement of new arrivals, is significant and can influence how frequently undergraduates use the library. This discovery is comparable to that of Umeozor & Afolabi (2014), who looked into the impact of current awareness services (CAS) and the library environment on students' use of library information resources at a Federal University library in South-South, Nigeria. They discovered that CAS, such as posting on the library notice boards, has a positive impact on students' usage of university libraries.

Selective dissemination of information and use of library information resources

Adetomiwa (2015) conducted a study on the impact of selective distribution of information (SDI) services on library customers' use of the facilities. 33 registered library customers at Redeemers University in Ede, Nigeria, who benefit from selected information services were asked about themselves on a profile form. According to the findings, 13 users in the management sciences received 362 email messages covering a variety of topics, while 17 users received 475 emails that continued to provide knowledge in the field of natural sciences. The findings also showed that 3 users received a total of 91 pieces of information that had been disseminated in a selected manner over a range of humanities topics. 33 individuals in total received 948 items through email from the university library. From the foregoing, it can be concluded that various users' use of libraries can be influenced by the information provided to them through deliberate information dissemination.

Olajide & Otunla (2015) examined the relationship between selective dissemination of information and use of information resources by student nurses in Bowen, University, Nigeria. The study used a questionnaire as its primary data gathering tool and a descriptive research methodology. According to the research, 114 (47%) of the students said they were unable to use the library since some of the information sources didn't meet their demands. A majority of respondents, 124 (51.0), agreed that they would give up their search without assistance from library workers. This demonstrates a link between the use of libraries and the selective transmission of information. By compiling and providing appropriate information resources to undergraduates, selective distribution services hope to save them time. The act of students giving up on a search procedure due to a failed search illustrates the significance of and demand for selective distribution of information services to undergraduates. Therefore, it follows that a library that offers efficient the selective distribution services will have more undergraduate users who will use the library efficiently for a variety of academic tasks. This supports the

argument made by Olorunfemi & Ipadeola in 2021, who claimed that for a library to be effective in the twenty-first century, it must satisfy the informational, research, educational, and recreational needs of its patrons. It must also continue to ensure that patrons make the most of the library's information resources by offering reference services like the careful distribution of information.

Methodology

The research used a descriptive survey approach. 17451 undergraduate students from the four universities in Bayelsa State made up the study's population, with a sample size of 349 representing 20% of the total population. The tool utilized to get the data was a questionnaire. 349 of the 346 questionnaires that were delivered to the respondents were later retrieved and confirmed to be valid. According to the research questions and hypotheses, the copies of the questionnaire were analyzed. The analysis will be conducted using SPSS, a statistical software for social science. While the five research hypotheses evaluated in the study were analyzed using multiple regression and Pearson's product-moment correlation coefficient, the research questions will be analyzed using descriptive statistics like frequency and percentages. The research hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Answers to Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between answering reference queries and the use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa state?

Table 1: Relationship between answering of reference queries and use of library information resources

Variables	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Df	r	P	Sig.
Answering reference Queries	346	16.06	2.52	345	.608	.000	S
Use of library information Resources	346	21.10	2.55				

The association between responding to reference requests and using library information resources by undergraduates at universities in Bayelsa State is shown in Table 1. The table demonstrated a substantial positive link between responding to reference requests and undergraduate students' use of library information resources at universities in Bayelsa State ($r = .608$; $p < 0.05$). This suggests that there is a strong correlation between responding to reference requests and undergraduate students' use of library information resources at universities in Bayelsa State

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between referral service and use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa state?

Table 2: Relationship between referral services and use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa state.

Variables	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Df	R	P	Sig
Referral service	346	14.23	3.05	345	.168	.002	S
Use of library information resources	346	21.10	2.55				

The association between library information resources used by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa State and referral services is shown in Table 2. The table demonstrated a substantial positive link between referral services and undergraduates' use of library information resources at institutions in Bayelsa State ($r = .168$; $p < 0.05$). This suggests a beneficial relationship between referral services and the use of library information resources by undergraduates at universities in Bayelsa State.

Research Question 3: What is the relationship between user education and use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa state?

Table 3: Relationship between user education and use of library information resources

Variables	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Df	R	P	Sig
User education	346	20.34	2.50	345	.489	.000	S
Use of library information Resources	346	21.10	2.55				

The link between user education and library information resource use by undergraduates at universities in Bayelsa State is depicted in Table 3. The table demonstrated a significant positive link between user education ($r = .489$; $p < 0.05$) and undergraduate students' utilization of library information resources at universities in Bayelsa State. This suggests that user education and the usage of library information resources by undergraduates at universities in Bayelsa state are positively correlated.

Research Question 4: What is the relationship between current awareness service and use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa state?

Table 4: Relationship between current awareness service and use of library information resources

Variables	N	Mean	St.Dev	Df	R	P	Sig
Current awareness service	346	15.64	2.68	345	.230	.000	S
Use of library information Resources	346	21.10	2.55				

The association between the utilization of library information resources by undergraduates at universities in Bayelsa state is shown in Table 4. The table demonstrated a substantial positive link between undergraduate students' utilization of library information resources and current awareness service ($r = .230$; $p 0.05$). This suggests a beneficial relationship between current awareness services and library information resource utilization by undergraduate students at universities.in Bayelsa State.

Research question 5: What is the relationship between selective dissemination of information and use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa state?

Table 5: Relationship between selective dissemination of information and use of library information resources

Variables	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Df	R	P	Sig
Selective dissemination of information	346	16.25	2.21	345	.116	.030	S
Use of library information resources	346	21.10	2.55				

Table 5 depicts the connection between selective information dissemination and undergraduate students' utilization of library information resources at Bayelsa state universities. The table demonstrated a substantial positive link between selective information dissemination and undergraduate students' utilization of library information resources at institutions in Bayelsa State ($r = .116$; $p 0.05$). This suggests that selective information dissemination and undergraduates' use of library information resources at universities in Bayelsa State are positively correlated.

Testing of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between answering reference queries and the use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa State. According to Table 1 above, there is a substantial positive link between responding to reference questions and undergraduate students' use of library information resources at institutions in Bayelsa State ($r = .608$; $p < 0.05$). This suggests that providing students with adequate responses to their questions about library resources will make it easier for undergraduates to use those resources in university libraries. As a result, the null hypothesis is disproved, and the alternative, according to which there is a notable positive link between undergraduates' usage of library information resources and their ability to answer questions, is accepted.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between referral services and the use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa State. According to the results from Table 2 above, referral services have a substantial positive link with undergraduate students' use of library information resources in Bayelsa State Universities ($r = .168$; $p < 0.05$). This suggests that offering referral services to undergraduates by library staff will stimulate the use of library information resources both within and outside the library, allowing university libraries to achieve their stated goals and objectives. The alternative, which claims that there is a significant positive link between referral service and use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa State, is accepted in light of the findings, and the null hypothesis is thus rejected.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between user education and the use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa State. According to Table 3, there is a strong positive link between user education and undergraduate students' usage of library information resources at institutions in Bayelsa State ($r = .489$; $p < 0.05$). This suggests that teaching patrons how to use different library resources, such as books, reference materials, and e-resources, can have a favourable impact on how undergraduates use library information resources. This serves as another reminder that libraries must assist patrons and arm them with current information retrieval knowledge. The alternative, which asserts that there is a significant positive association between user education and use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa State, is therefore accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant relationship between current awareness services and the use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa State. The results from

Table 4 above show a substantial positive link between the use of library information resources by undergraduates in Bayelsa State universities and the current awareness service ($r = .230$; $p < 0.05$). This suggests that promoting current awareness, such as by displaying recently obtained information materials and informing undergraduates about the advent of such information resource(s), might improve how effectively users, especially undergraduates, use libraries and their resources. As a result, the study's prediction that current awareness services affect how library information resources are used. The alternative, which asserts that there is a significant positive association between current awareness services and the use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa State, is therefore accepted, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant relationship between selective dissemination of information and the use of library and information resources in university libraries in Bayelsa State. The data from Table 5 above revealed a significant positive association between selective information distribution and undergraduates' utilization of library information resources at Universities in Bayelsa State ($r = .116$; $p < 0.05$). This has the implication that selective information dissemination services, such as giving specific informational items or materials to undergraduates, will have a favourable impact on how much these students use the library and its resources. The alternative, which asserts that there is a significant positive link between the selective dissemination of information services and the use of library information resources by undergraduates in universities in Bayelsa State, is accepted in light of this finding, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations can be made:

- **Enhance reference services:** Reference services, such as answering reference questions, supplying referral services, and offering user education, ought to be prioritized by libraries. Undergraduates should have easy access to librarians who can help them navigate and efficiently use the library's resources.
- **Implement current awareness services:** In order to keep undergraduates informed about new resources, updates, and pertinent material in their fields of study, libraries should build and promote current awareness services. Online platforms, bulletin boards, and email newsletters can all be used to do this.
- **Emphasize selective dissemination of information:** Libraries should concentrate on selective information transmission as a way to give undergraduates specialized and individualized content. This can be done through a variety of platforms, including social

media, email notifications, and customized portals. Libraries may increase the value and relevance of their resources by focusing on the needs and interests of each user.

- **Offer user training and workshops:** To teach undergraduates efficient information retrieval and utilization techniques, libraries should regularly host workshops and training sessions. These sessions might go over things like database searching, citation management, critically evaluating sources, and research techniques. Libraries can encourage independent and productive academic study by equipping undergrads with these crucial skills.
- **Improve communication and outreach:** To ensure that undergraduates are aware of the assistance available, libraries should actively market their services and resources in a variety of ways. This may entail working with academic departments, taking part in orientation activities, producing educational guides, and using social media platforms to interact with the student community.
- **Seek feedback and adapt services:** Undergraduates' needs and experiences should be routinely surveyed by libraries. Surveys, focus groups, or suggestion boxes can be used for this. Libraries may continually enhance their services and better meet the changing needs of undergraduates by actively listening to users and altering services as necessary.

Overall, the study reveals that tailored services and individualized support are essential for enabling undergraduates to use library information resources effectively. By putting these suggestions into practice, libraries can better support undergraduate education, encourage academic success, and improve the overall user experience.

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