A Survey of the extent of utilization of services of university of Lagos library

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Professional Practice

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Keywords

Needs, Users, Utilization, Library services.

Abstract

This paper is a result of an investigation on the needs and extent to which library clientele utilize library services and facilities being provided by the university of Lagos, Akoka, Yaba.

The Research employed the use of several copies of a questionnaire and interview methods on 225 Respondents to gather necessary data for the study. The survey method covered a period of 2004/2005 academic session of the studied.

It was discovered that the use of library is largely influenced by the users' familiarity with the library and its resources. The study revealed that facilities provided by the library under investigation were not sufficient for the library clientele. The Researchers therefore recommend that adequate funding be made available to the library to ensure the provision of its essential duties.

INTRODUCTION

Issues relating to library effectives are among those usually raised by librarians and attempt to ensure proper utilization of its resources. Busha (1980) considered factors relating to library effectives as those that include choice and suitbility of library materials; the nature of library collections in relation to needs of clientele, the use and non-use of library material collections and services among clientele; the efficiency with which information in libraries are stored, retrieved and utilized. These are according to him closely related to the role of libraries as social, educational, or informational institutions that is, to the nature and impact of libraries on their communities – whether the community is a University, industry, government agency, School, municipality, or some other entity.

User studies are often designed to identify and to analyze how various persons or groups use libraries. Busha (1980) further stated that, the significance and value of knowing the communication needs and practices of library users are being increasingly recognized as librarians find themselves in keen competition for financial resources. This financial resources can be used to expand information services and resources particularly new media of communication and innovations such as the electronic digital computer. Taylor (1968) stated that the librarian must become a modern generalist concerned and knowledgeable about print sound and image about automation and computer technology and about formal and informal communication systems.

Busha (1980) sums up the above assertions that user studies are often investigated as attempts to understand, justify, explain, or expand library usage and consequently, to gain more knowledge about the process of communication insofar as libraries and their clientele are concerned.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The University of Lagos library moved to its present permanent premises in Akoka – Yaba, Lagos, in September, 1965.

It was estimated at the time that it could take well over ten years before embarking on further expansion. This was because the building and facilities were considered very adequate and the rate of growth was expected to be at a moderate pace.

Within five years, the need for expansion in terms of accommodation, services and facilities arose. This was as a result of the unexpected rapid growth of the University population in the following areas:

(i) Student intake of four hundred (400) in 1965/66 rose to 4,416 in 1975
(ii) Staff development – 200 in 1965/66 rose to 725 in 1975/76.

This in turn led to an increase in stock and demand for more sophisticated services and facilities in the University library. As the library got larger, it
many of the users. It also became paramount on the library itself to identify clearly the needs of its clientele and to cater effectively for them. By the 2002/2003 academic session the student intake had risen to 43,000.00 while staff intake was estimated to 2000 plus. The library collection by the same period had also increased to 330,000 volumes with a journal subscription of 450 titles.

It also became necessary to have a feedback data on patron behaviour on services and facilities so as to have adequate information on the nature and activities of the library clientele. Although many libraries keep statistics as a means of measuring and assessing their activities, insufficient knowledge about how to use these statistics makes them inadequate tools for effective planning. Bearing in mind, therefore, the need for the library to examine its goals constantly in order to be at alert to the ever rapid changes that are taking place around it in the University became necessary that a scientific method of measurement of activities, services facilities, attitudes and behaviour should be used for evaluating the present situation and for making an adequate forecast of the future.

With the foregoing in mind, the study set out to assess the needs of the users of the University of Lagos Library system and to determine the extent to which the library is meeting these needs in providing facilities and service that are used by them.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Previous studies on academic library use revealed various characteristics of library habits of students. Olanlokun (1982) in a study of the use of academic library found out that students used the library for class work, research, discussion, leisure and other purposes. While Wire (1995) in a survey of an undergraduate library noted significant changes in library use patterns that have implications for the redesigning of academic library services.

Olanlokun (1982) tried to see the relationship between accessibility and the use made of academic library by undergraduates at the institution. He looked at two specific areas in the library. These are:

1. Reserved Book Service, and
2. Reference Service

He concluded from the analysis of the data gathered that more accessibility encouraged the students to:

(a) visit the library more often

(b) stay longer in the library

(c) reach library materials more easily

(d) increase their rate of use

Ifidon (1985) in Oyesiku and Oduwole (2004) list five major objectives of the University library as:

(a) provision of materials in support of learning and teaching.

(b) provision of materials to meet the requirements of faculty specialists and postgraduate students who are doing research.

(c) provision of materials to assist the library user in his own personal self development.

(d) cooperation with other University libraries, with a view to developing a network of academic library resources which are at the disposal of all students and teaching faculties and finally.

(e) meeting the specialized information needs of the regions within which the Universities are situated.

Downs (1983) emphasized the importance of the library in any educational set up. According to him:

"No well informed person would question that the library should occupy a central place in an educational institution. For scholars and students in the humanities and social sciences, libraries serve as basic resources ....... "

Academic libraries ideally should be living organs that are fully responsive to the needs of the patrons. Olanlokun (1983) has reminded librarians that;

"libraries need continuous feedback from their users lest they lose touch with the realities of their existence".

This view corroborated Taylor (1968) research, who conducted a series of unstructured and informal interviews with help desk staff to unearth the social dynamics of users searching skill.

As a result, Taylor (1968) noted that 'reference librarians' have developed.

"... rather sophisticated methods of interrogating users. These methods are difficult to describe, indeed some believe they are indescribable ... [Because] we are dealing here, of course, with a very subtle problem – how one person tries to find out what another person wants to know, when the latter cannot describe the need
precisely ... The negotiation of reference questions is one of the most complex acts of human communication. In this act, one person tries to describe for another person not something he knows, but rather something he doesn't know'.

Taylor (1968) subsequently developed what can only be described as a heavily cognitive model to account for the 'sophisticated methods' devised by reference librarian to negotiate reference questions. The model suggests that help desk staff exploit five distinct 'filters' to articulate and translate user needs into descriptions that 'fit' the library catalogue and permit the identification of users' solutions to the problem situation.

As Garfinkel (1996) puts it, "The principal formal analytic devices currently in hand, of paying careful attention to the use, the design, and administration of generic representational theorizing – models, for example, get a job done that with the same technical skills in administering them lose the very phenomena that they profess ... immortal ordinary society evidently, just in any actual case ... is only discoverable. It is not imaginable. It cannot be imagined but is only actually found out, and just in any actual case. The way it is done is everything it can consist of and imagined descriptions cannot capture this detail".

An alternate approach might instead be adopted that replaces a concern with the development of formal analytic models of practical action with a concern to produce real-world; real-time descriptions of the lived work of collaboration to identify and explicate the subtle methods that staff and library users in this case – exploit to get the search done and locate information of relevance. Crabtree (2000).

This assertion confirms that the library user is regarded as evaluator to determine whether the library is playing its role satisfactorily or not. In providing quality services and users satisfaction, academic libraries distinguish their services through friendly, helpful and knowledgeable advice and the best technological resources available. Millson-Martula and Menon (1995) maintained that one of the expectations is incorporated into the development of programs and services.
A Survey of the Extent of Utilization of Services of...

Egberongbe, H. S. (Mrs). & Okiki, Chris O.

Table I: Status of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Staff</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>216</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Analysis show that undergraduate and Postgraduate Students with 86 (40%) and 64 (30%) were the main respondents, while Academic and Administrative Staff with 17% and 13% form the other degree of respondents.

Table II: Frequency of Utilization of Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manual Catalogue</td>
<td>397</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPAC</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet Search</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Query</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photocopy Services</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lending System</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library Orientation</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1597</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table, one would observe that the number of responses is far higher than the population of the respondents. This is so because the respondents were given choices of responding to as many options as possible.

The response presented shows that photocopy services (30%) Manual Catalogue (25%) Online Public access catalogue and library orientation manual with (16%) and (15%) respectively are frequently used. However, reference query (9%) and lending system (2%) were lowly utilized. This may lead to lack of awareness of library services.

Table III: Ranking or Distribution of Library Facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Book Consultation</td>
<td>573</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal Consultation</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Resource</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference Materials</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers &amp; Magazines</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indexes and Abstracting</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1300</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table IV: Ranked distribution of adequacy of facilities and services available at the library.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adequate Enough</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adequate</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifference</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>216</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above shows that 89 (41%) respondents indicate that the library facilities and services rendered are inadequate; 61 (28%) and 46(22%) rated facilities and services “adequate” and “adequate enough” respectively while 20 (9%) were “indifferent”. This may be the reason why they make less use of the library.

Table V: Level of Communication through library guide and instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESPONSES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient Enough</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufficient</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Comment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>216</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the above table it is clear that the level of communication is insufficient. The implication is that users of library careless of relevant information that will help them in accessing library resources.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study reveals that the use of library is largely influenced most by the users’ familiarity with the library and its resources. It was discovered that the facilities provided by University of Lagos library is not sufficient for the users’ needs when compared with other first generation Universities. For example; The Kenneth Dike library of the University of Ibadan library and The Hezekiah Oluwasammi
who are about three times bigger in terms of building.

The low rating of Library guide manual could be traced to the fact that the mandatory use of library guide was introduced towards the tail end of 2003/04 academic session. It was discovered that many users find it difficult to remember what was shown to them during the orientation programmes to the extent that majority of the respondents were not aware of the lending system in the library.

Adequate funding for ensuring good stocking of informational materials as well as recruitment of well trained staff is imperative to effective service delivery. Also, assertiveness an instruction and knowledge on how to use library resources will help to increase library usage and enable users to effectively use library resource for their academic works.

The year 2006 has however ushered in a new down in the life of the University of Lagos Library. The establishment of a virtual reference library - t e UniversitiesConnect library donated by the MTN Foundation is a real step in the right direction of what can be termed as academic reengineering of the library.

The library with a state-of-the-art furnishing and equipped with one hundred and twenty computer systems to provide electronic services such as e-journals, e-books, e-references, inter library leading, bibliographic searches etc. this is achieved through access to databases such as Oxford Journals online, scienceDirect library Online, EBSCOhost online database, online digital library etc.

The project no doubt is bound to enrich the University of Lagos Library through the emerging trends in libraries in the wake of current technological advancement.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the quality of the library’s resources is a key variable when researching into library usage. This is so because academic library users patronize libraries frequently to find solutions to their academic quest, hence it is imperative that University of Lagos library should have the right kind of resources to meet their users’ needs.
CONTENTS

i. Editorial

iii. Abstracts & Keywords

77. Legal Information Resources in Cyberspace: Opportunities and Challenges for Developing Countries

86. The Effects of Bibliotherapy on Prisoners: A Case Study of Ikoyi Prison, Lagos Nigeria.

94. A Survey of the Extent of Utilization of Services of University of Lagos Library

99. A Comparative Analysis of ASCON and CMD Libraries


121. Book Donations and Law Libraries: Development, Dependence, or Pauperization?

131. Computerisation of Yaba College of Technology Library: An Experience


147. Interface Model for Information Utilization in Research Institutions


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Owoeye Jide
Egberongbe Halima S. (Mrs)
Okki Christopher O.
Ogungbo W. O.
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