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An Appraisal of Library Use Pattern among Undergraduate Students of University of Port Harcourt.

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Abstract

This study was conducted to assess library use pattern by undergraduates in the University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The study examined the reasons for library use by undergraduates and their opinion on library use. Seven-hundred and fifty structured questionnaires were distributed to students in four selected faculties of Sciences, Management, and Medical Sciences of the University of Port Harcourt, and six hundred were retrieved as correctly responded to, amounting to 80% response rate. The result showed that undergraduates recognize the importance of the library as a place for general knowledge update; however, they use the library for preparation for examinations. The study also found that undergraduates identify the library as the hub of knowledge acquisition. The study recommends that library administrators should embark on a massive advocacy campaign programmes aimed at improving library use by undergraduates.

Keywords: Academic library, undergraduates, Library use pattern, University of Port Harcourt

Introduction

Academic libraries are libraries attached to institutions of learning in support of the curricula and research activities. Their mandate is usually geared towards supporting faculty members in teaching and research activities and also students'

learning needs through the provision of information resources. Academic libraries are often engaged in the acquisition of information resources in all formats including institutional repositories, technical services, inter-library loan, and document delivery services among others. Academic libraries also educate users on proper

information seeking behavior. This is all done to ensure effective, timely and accurate access, search, retrieval, and use of information.

It has been noted that both students and lecturers rely mostly on texts and didactic lectures, however librarians have expressed their concerns on poor use of the library. They observe that students are not committed to using the library resources for their optimal life-long learning experience. The consequences of this are on the rate of decline in the production of quality of graduates. This situation may not be unrelated to the inauspicious way undergraduates perceive the library, thus, leading to poor utilization of its resources.

The role of information to undergraduates and library use extend beyond the university environment and the immediate application to solve only academic problems. The significance transcends right into the workplace, leading to the effective and enlightened citizenry, it has lasting implications that can impact the lives of many people around the globe. However, it is the perception of students that determines their library use pattern, for this reason, Odu and Edam-Agbor (2018) opined that the primary focus in Library and Information Science profession is provision of relevant information resources in different formats, while access, utilisation and users' satisfaction with these resources and services is the major goal. The authors further explained that student's library use pattern is, therefore, a measure of the level of importance attached to the library by its users. By implication, library information resources influence the perception of its users and the attitude and approaches adopted in the search for information in a library.

Although an academic library may be well stocked, utilization of its material is determined largely by the functionality and efficiency of service delivery by the library. A library is evaluated based, not only on the size of its collection but also on the active use of the resources as evidenced by the library statistics. Despite the recent transformation in most academic libraries, with the evolution of ICTs and the internet which made it possible for the provision of electronic resources, academic libraries still experience low library usage. This poses the question whether the educational sector or institutions of higher learning have failed in their key role of moulding and developing a successful human resource which is achievable through education and the cultivation of a good library culture. In the light of this, the aim of this study is to assess the library use pattern among undergraduates.

Literature Review

A lot of researchers have carried out studies on the use of the library by undergraduates. Although students often visit the library for different purposes such as studies, class assignments, project work, leisure, preparing for examinations/tests/homework. Oyesiku and Oduwale (2004) revealed that students use the library mostly during examination period. Chamani (2010) observed that students who do not appreciate the value of the library are at a disadvantage and may visit the library to only read for examinations. Chikonzo and Aina (2006) supporting this view, carried out a research on veterinary students' information needs in two universities in Nigeria and disclosed that writing homework and studying for examination or tests were the main reasons for which they needed information. In addition, they

reported that the key sources of information for these students were videos, CD-ROM databases, books, handouts, the internet, projects, journals and lecture notes. However, Kakai, Ikoja-Odongo and Kigongo-Bukenya (2004) contributing to this discourse asserted that lecture notes and handouts are the most preferred and used resources by students, followed by using departmental book-banks and then the university libraries. Therefore, it is not surprising that Akin and Ajayi (2008) observed that out of 475 students of the Federal University of Technology Library in Nigeria, only 82 of them use the library on daily basis.

There are so many reasons students use the library. For instance, Whitmire (2001) observed that undergraduates mainly use the library as a place to study and make photocopies, without making significant utilization of a number of other library services. Similarly, Hillers (2002) reported that undergraduates visit the library to study rather than to search for books or journals. In a study conducted by Igun and Adogbeji (2007) among the postgraduate students, majority of the students claimed that their main purpose of using the library is to update their knowledge. In supporting this, cju@aber.ac.uk asserted that majority of the postgraduate students used the library to consult research materials. Guskin (1996) emphasized that library use promotes active learning and thus contributes to students' ability to think critically and work well independently and in a group.

Access to internet could be one of the reasons for low library use by undergraduates during lecture period and examination. In confirmation, Ajiboye and Adeyinka (2007) carried out a study on undergraduate information seeking behaviour in the University of Botswana

and found out that internet is the most consulted source, followed by students' class notes and handouts. Students make little use of indexes, abstracts and dissertations by seeking the easiest means available for obtaining information. Valentine (1993) affirmed that undergraduates looked for the quickest methods that would bring about results in the course of their research by going online first. In the same vein, Mittermeyer (2003) reported that many students used the internet extensively for finding course-related information. Lippincott and Kyrillidou (2004), in their study on information seeking behaviour of undergraduate students, also discovered that 90 percent of students used search engines on a daily basis and 19 percent used the library daily. Similarly, Kerin, Madden, and Fulton (2004), in their study of undergraduate engineering students, reported that the majority of the students use internet was the first sources of information for a project or assignment. Contributing to this discourse, Van-Scoyoc and Cason (2006) observed that students use the internet at 76 percent of the time and class websites was used almost as often at 71 percent and 36 percent respectively. Apart from websites and web-based lecture notes, lack of awareness is the primary reason why undergraduate students did not use the library's electronic databases.

The issue of underutilization of library resources in Nigeria is an all-encompassing one. Chamani (2010) asserted that Nigerian university libraries do not meet user expectations. As a result, most students do not learn how to use the library and are not aware of the importance of the library to their studies. Callinan (2005) observed that there are differences in the extent to which scores of information are used by students in different years of their studies. Nwezeh,

(2010) pointed out that the consequences of the student's inability to use the library will include among other things, a serious debasement of quality of university education, which maybe consequently have a negative effect on the job performance of the university products.

Akande (2003) emphasized that a great deal of effort is being made to assist fresh undergraduates (the incoming students) into the university in the use of library resources. The attempt which include introduction of user education is to build good library culture into the students' right from the foundation of their university education. Craeser (2006) explained that one of the aims of user surveys must be to improve the services provided to users. High overall satisfaction levels are good for publicity and may persuade institutional management that all is well with the library, but they should not lead to complacency within the service. Hence, it becomes essential to know the needs of the users in order to provide and cater for such needs. In line with this, Bassey (2006) posited that satisfying the request of users implies providing the actual information or services that will meet their needs. This paper, therefore, focuses on the library use pattern of the undergraduate students.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives were outlined to guide this study.

1. To determine the library use pattern of undergraduate students of University of Port Harcourt.
2. To establish the reason behind the library use pattern of undergraduate students of University of Port Harcourt.

3. To find out the library use opinion of undergraduate students.

Research questions

To realize the objectives of this study, the following research questions were formulated.

1. What is the library use pattern of undergraduate students of University of Port Harcourt?
2. What is the reason behind library use pattern of undergraduate students?
3. What is the opinion of undergraduate students on the use of library?

Methods

The study utilized descriptive survey method. The population for the study comprised of undergraduate students from three faculties in the University of Port Harcourt – Faculty of Management Sciences, Faculty of Medical Sciences and Faculty of Sciences. Out of the 5,040 undergraduate students in the selected faculties in the 2017/2018 academic session, a total of 750 respondents were randomly sampled. The choice of these three faculties was informed by the massive number spawned across the undergraduate population in the university. The 750 respondents were randomly sampled between male and female from each of the faculties. A structured questionnaire was designed for data collection. The questionnaire was administered to the respondents in each of the faculties studied and was collected at the point of administration for interpretation. Out of the 750 questionnaires shared, 600 were retrieved indicating 80% response rate. Frequency counts on the items were analyzed using percentages.

Result

Demographic Information of the Respondents

Table 1. Population of the study

S/N	Gender	Population (%)	Sampled (%)	Responses (%)
1	Male	2040 (40.5)	302	160
2	Female	3000 (59.5)	448	440
	Total	5040 (100)	750 (14.9)	600 (80)

The demographic information pertaining to the respondents were analyzed thus; those who are duly registered to use the library are 472 (78.7%) while 128 (21.3%) were not registered. 403 (67.2%) have library access card, while 197 (32.8%) do not have. 557 (92.8%) agreed to have benefitted from library use while 23 (7.2) disagreed (Table 2).

There is a difference between the registered and access card holders because the University of Port Harcourt Library allows users who have the library access card to utilize the full library services, while those who are registered but do not have the library access card are limited in their use of the library services.

Table 2. Registered and Access Card Holders

S/N	Items	YES (%)	NO (%)
1	Registered users	472 (78.7)	128 (21.3)
2	Access card holders	403 (67.2)	197 (32.8)

Library use Pattern of Undergraduate Students

Table 3. Library use pattern among undergraduate students

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Daily	94	15.7
2	Once a week	19	3.2
3	More than once a week	172	28.7
4	When necessary	256	42.7
5	During examination	17	2.8
6	More than one choice	45	7.5
	Total	600	100

The findings from Table 3 shows that 15.7% of the respondents visit the library daily, 3.2% visit the library once a week, 28.7% visit more than once a week, 42.7% visit when

necessary, 2.8 visit the library only during examination, and 7.5% visit the library for more than one purpose.

Reason for Library Use Pattern of Undergraduate Students

Table 4. The Reasons for Using the Library

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage %
1	prepare for lecture notes	8	1.3
2	update general knowledge	349	58.2
3	do class assignments	6	1
4	prepare for examination	107	17.7
5	engage in group reading	2	0.3
6	More than one choice	128	21.3
	Total	600 (100)	100

The result on Table 4 shows 1.3% of the respondents visit the library to prepare lecture notes, 58.2% to update general knowledge, 1% to do class assignments, 17.7% to prepare for examination, 0.3% to engage in group reading, while 21.3% of the respondents use the library for many purposes.

Perception of Undergraduate Students on the Use of Library

Table 5. Undergraduate Perception of the library use

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage %
1	Book store	67	11.2
2	Information bank	381	63.5
3	Reading facility	49	8.2
4	More than one choice	103	17.2
	Total	600	100

The result on Table 5 shows 11.2% of the respondents perceive the library as a book store, 63.5% as information bank, 8.2% as a reading facility, and 17.2% for many purposes.

Discussion

The library is the hub of academic activities in the institutions of higher learning. Therefore, information materials are acquired and organised to assist the students and academic community in their pursuit of academic goals. The University of Port Harcourt has as her vision to attain enlightenment and self-reliance through the pursuit of purposeful academic objectives. The library tapped into this vision to provide books, non-book, electronic resources and ancillary services which are invaluable in extending and supporting the university's programmes of teaching, learning and research. Therefore, it is of paramount importance for students to utilize the services provided in the library to support and strengthen their learning processes. It is on this ground that this study assessed the library use pattern of the students of the University of Port Harcourt. The findings were as follows:

The first research question of this study seeks to identify the library use pattern of undergraduate students. The findings submit that majority of the undergraduate students in University of Port Harcourt do not use the library daily. This underutilization of library resources by undergraduates simply implies that most undergraduates fail to benefit from the numerous information resources that would help them to be better-informed students. This finding agrees with Akin and Ajayi (2008) who observed that out of 475 students of the Federal University of Technology Library in Nigeria, only 82 of them use the library on daily basis.

From the second question that investigated the reason behind library use pattern of undergraduate students. The result indicated that most of respondents students understand that the library is for knowledge

update. However, it was discovered that the students use the library mostly for examinations. Hence, the library should be sufficiently funded so as to procure current and relevant collections to enable undergraduates increase library use for knowledge update. This result agrees with Oyesiku and Oduwale (2004) opinion that students use the library mostly during examinations to study and to do class assignments. However, the finding is in sharp contrast to the assertion of Fasae (2011), that majority of the postgraduate students used the library to consult research materials. This realization revealed the fact that most Nigerian students understand the proper use of the library but fail to optimally utilize the library.

The last question - what is the opinion of undergraduate students on the use of library. The result depicts that as earlier reported, students understand the proper need and use of library. Majority perceive the library as information bank. From the findings of this study, it follows that students view the library as a place mainly to update knowledge. Consequently, a report from Nwezeh and Shabi (2011) supported the findings which state that most students perceive the library as a place to checkout library materials (consultation).

Conclusion

The main responsibility of the university library is to support the university achieves its goals and objectives of teaching, research and learning through the provision of excellent information resources. It is the utilization of library resources and services that determine its worth and usefulness to its users. University libraries offer resources to both students and staff as well as encourage information literacy. Thus, information is a

vital resource needed by students to perform well in their academic pursuit and the university library plays a major role in this respect. The value of the library in the successful completion of undergraduate's studies and its long-lasting benefits for life-long learning has been established. Consequently, this study has investigated the growing concern of stakeholders on the dwindling library use pattern among undergraduates in Nigeria. The study revealed that the pattern of use of libraries among undergraduates in Nigeria is generally low, even during examination period, as they mainly come to the library to update their general knowledge when necessary. It was also observed that most of them perceive the library as a place for consultation and a place to prepare for examinations and tests.

Recommendations

The paper recommends that the librarians should intensify their efforts in utilizing library advocacy campaign programmes to reach out to the university community on library use. In addition, they should organize book exhibitions regularly and library orientations for effective use of the library resources and services. Librarians should liaise with Heads of Departments and faculty members, as stakeholders and partners to encourage students to use the library. They should lay more emphasis on the huge benefits of routine use of information resources in the library, not only during the examinations but also at other periods. This will improve their information search and retrieval skills and other literacy proficiencies. Based on the findings, the paper concludes that library orientation programme should be intensified and library use instruction in school curriculum be strengthened, on the importance of library use. This is because previous efforts have not yielded expected results as evident from the findings.

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