



Article

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION IN THE TERTIARY INSTITUTION LIBRARIES IN ANAMBRA STATE NIGERIA: TYPES AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

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Abstract

Effectiveness of patterns of information dissemination in academic libraries has been the subject of much investigation. This study examines the effectiveness of each pattern of information dissemination. A random sample of 200 out of the 600 daily users of the libraries including 20 practicing librarians was selected. Structured questionnaires were administered to the respondents. Results showed that most of the patterns adopted by the libraries were ineffective. One of the major findings is that some information seekers visit the libraries without being well guided. Recommendations pertinent to effective information dissemination patterns were suggested.

Introduction

Information is the essential ingredient of any control system. According to Daniel (1986), it is clear that the most powerful and developed nations in the world today are what they are by the virtue of the information they possess and utilize to arrogate to themselves a monopoly of the best of our world, or what one may call the good life. Dosunmu (1981), traced the origin of information as the forefront of research. Its nature and behavioural patterns characterize it as the third resource of nature after matter and energy. In general, information flows from a source through a channel to a destination, if there is any problem in the process, it is problem of 'source', 'channel' or 'destination'. He pointed out that if there be a central body co-ordinating the flow of information in the envisaged system, it would be impossible to disseminate required information to various categories of users on a general basis since they vary tremendously not only in

subject interest but also in levels of sophistication. He went further to define selective dissemination as the construction and maintenance of group as well as individual profiles on the basis of their needs, in order to ensure that the package of information reaching each group or individual has a very high relevance ratio.

Information is created, preserved and retrieved so that it can be passed on to others for their various needs and uses (Fijabi, 2001:34). Information services involve the in-depth analysis of the intellectual contents of the literature of a specialized subject area and its systematic reorganization and dissemination in form of bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, review journals, current contents and other alerting reporting journal literature for the use of specialists (Edoka, 2000).

At a more elementary level, special library users can be kept up-to-date by the circulation of periodicals, regular list of abstracts, accession lists, house journals and the like. These materials would help to keep users in the picture and invite them to ask for further information, or to see a particular article, report or book as required.

The role of academic library is not only to provide the necessary information needs of the users but also go beyond to anticipate their needs, keeping in view the new materials in their subject area of interest respectively. The library also informs the users of such information as they are procured into the library.

The staffing of a reference and information service is a matter of the highest importance. The work calls for high degrees of bibliographical knowledge, and experience, ingenuity and flexibility of mind, and the right psychological approach to enquirers. The latter is vitally significant, because one of the most difficult tasks confronting a reference librarian is to get the enquirer to express specially and exactly what information he is seeking (Harrison, 1980).

The academic libraries in Anambra State have been playing these basic roles through some adopted patterns of information dissemination.

Purpose of the Study

This study specifically seeks to assess the performance of the information dissemination patterns in the academic libraries and also to investigate how effective the libraries have been in meeting the various information needs of the users.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study

- (1) What are the patterns of information dissemination in academic libraries?
- (2) To what extent does the pattern of information dissemination meet the needs of the users?
- (3) What are the various methods that could be adopted to improve the information dissemination patterns?

Methodology

Population

The population of the study consists of all librarians and users of academic libraries in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Sample

Out of the total of 600 (six hundred) users of the libraries in a day, a sample of 200 (two hundred) was taken, which included 20 (twenty) librarians who receive copies of the questionnaire and helped to distribute them randomly at various service points in the libraries.

The inclusion of users in this study was based on the conviction that no pattern of information dissemination can be declared effective without seeking and analyzing the views of users of the information.

Data Analysis

The data collected were subsequently organized according to each research question and analyzed using simple descriptive approach, namely - percentages, mean and standard deviations and the mean score acceptable at 2.5, e.g.

N	=	200
X	=	Calculated mean score
SD	=	Standard Deviation
2.5	=	Acceptance level of mean score.

Table 1: Institutions and number of respondents

INSTITUTION	LIBRARIANS	USERS	TOTAL	%
UNIZIK, AWKA	7	60	67	33.5
FED. POLY., OKO	7	70	77	38.5
NOCEN, NSUGBE	6	50	56	28
TOTAL	20	180	200	100%

Table I above indicates that 28% of the respondents in the study were drawn from Nwafor Orizu College of Education, Nsugbe library. 33.5% drawn from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka while 38.5% of the participants were drawn from the Federal Polytechnic Library, Oko.

Table 2: Patterns for information dissemination in academic libraries in Anambra State. From the result, the following patterns are listed.

- Library Catalogues
- Bibliographical lists, e.g. Indexes, abstracts, reviews etc
- Display of recent acquisitions
- Selective dissemination of information
- Accessions Lists/Periodical circulation
- Abstract bulletins
- Personal notification by mail or telephone
- Library guides
- Serial indexes
- Seminar papers
- Annual reports
- News Summaries.

S/N	Pattern	N	X	SD	Decision
1	Library Catalogue	200	3.0	0.61	Effective
2	Bibliographical Lists	200	3.1	0.51	Effective
3	Display of recent acquisitions	200	2.04	0.37	Ineffective
4	Selective dissemination of information	200	3.0	0.61	Effective
5	Accession List/Periodical circulation	200	1.9	0.23	Ineffective
6	Abstract bulletins	200	3.0	0.61	Effective
7	Mail or telephone notification	200	1.9	0.23	Ineffective
8	Library guide	200	2.4	0.32	Ineffective
9	Serial Indexes	200	3.1	0.52	Effective
10	Seminar Papers	200	3.0	0.61	Effective
11	Annual reports	200	2.04	0.39	Ineffective
12	News summaries	200	2.04	0.37	Ineffective

It could be seen from the table 3 above, that respondents accepted items 1, 2, 4, 6, 9 and 10 as effective patterns of information dissemination to users as the items mean scores (X) are above the 2.5 acceptance level. The other items numbers 3, 5, 7, 8, 11 and 12 are regarded as ineffective patterns of information dissemination as their mean scores fall below the acceptance level of mean (X) score of 2.5.

Table 4: Methods of improving patterns of information dissemination in Academic Libraries in Anambra State, Nigeria

S/N	Pattern	X	SD	Decision
1	To make a regular study of user profiles. Such profiles must nevertheless be kept up to date and this is easier to arrange when SDI is automated.	3.6	0.63	Accepted
2	Display of recent acquisitions is particularly appropriate for informing people in general but it is also capable of many different applications in that a particular category of user can, when the need arises, be offered a publication specially designed for it.	3.0	0.61	Accepted
3	Subject specialist should be involved in the information dissemination because users have limited linguistic skills.	3.0	0.61	Accepted
4	Intensive library co-operation should be utilized in information dissemination because most users restrict their information seeking to very highly localized sources or collection of literature.	3.6	0.63	Accepted
5	Current awareness and alerting service, indexing and abstracting services.	3.6	0.63	Accepted
6	Subject analysis in cataloguing practice, subject indexes. Standardized bibliographic description.	3.0	0.61	Accepted
7	Photocopying relevant articles, preparing subject bibliographies, preparing newspaper and journal articles index.	3.6	0.63	Accepted
8	Current contents of journals are Xeroxed and sent to users.	3.6	0.63	Accepted
9	Translation service, research and annual reports, house journals, minutes of committee, and guides to library.	3.0	0.61	Accepted
10	Selective book reviews published regularly.	3.0	0.61	Accepted

Data in the table 4 above, show that items 1 - 10 in the table indicate proper and effective methods of information dissemination in the academic libraries in Anambra State because their mean scores fell above the accepted mean score level.

Discussion of Findings

From the data collected and analyzed, it was observed that 3 (three) academic libraries in Anambra State, Nigeria were involved in the study. The University, Polytechnic and College of Education were fully represented in the study. It was also observed that 200 (two hundred) respondents were involved in the study, made up of 20 (twenty) practicing Librarians and 180 (one hundred and eighty) users of the libraries.

The result of the table 2, showed that 12 (twelve) patterns of information dissemination are commonly used in the academic libraries.

Data from table 3 indicate that the following patterns are effective in the information dissemination.

- (1) Library Catalogue
- (2) Bibliographical lists
- (3) Selective dissemination of information
- (4) Abstract bulletins
- (5) Serial Indexes
- (6) Seminar Papers.

While the other patterns listed below are regarded as ineffective for information dissemination.

- (1) Display of recent acquisition
- (2) Accession List/Periodical Circulation
- (3) Mail or telephone notification
- (4) Library guide
- (5) Annual reports
- (6) News summaries

The library catalogue informs the users about the contents of the library, the authors, titles and subjects of books in the library. The bibliographical lists - e.g. Indexes, Abstracts, reviews etc. saves the users from wading through a host of literature to identify relevant data. Selective dissemination of information serves the group interests, or personal interest according to their various profiles. Abstract bulletins are often issued in such a way that required items can be ticked and the list returned to the library for supply, and alternatively tear-off slips can be used. Serial Indexes bring to the notice of researchers what exist in their areas of interest, thereby preventing wasted

effort by scanning through host of literature. Seminar papers presented by members of staff of the institutions are compiled and circulated to users of the library for their information needs. A circulated list of materials added to the library normally generates interest, but there is the problem of delay, the last person on the circulation list receiving the journal while the information is already stale, thus defeating the main purpose of current awareness service. The display of recent acquisitions draws attention to them, thereby generating interest. However, the problem of space is a limiting factor in the effective use of this pattern of information dissemination. Mail and telephone notification of information are often very slow, at times the mail got missing in transit and often there is distortion in the telephone information.

Printed guides enjoy the widest circulation among staff and students in their Universities or Colleges. Guides should not really be judged in isolation, in that they represent only one aspect of promotion of library use. Guides provide information to allow the new user to use the basic library services and to give him some idea of what else is available when and if he needs it. There is no one way or single formula for an effective guide. A glance at printed Annual Reports of various institutions reveals wide disparities of practice, some of them are issued as the 'Report of the library Committee', and at times they are embodied in the institution's Annual Report. The purpose of News Summaries is to supply general information to all sectors of the organization, particularly in respect of news relating to the organization. These can be in the form of Information Circulars, a digest of information about happenings within the organization, forthcoming events e.g. Conferences, or even staff announcements.

Conclusion

The primary objective of an academic library is to implement, enrich and support the educational programmes of the parent-institution. Ultimately, the goal of the libraries is to bring information seekers together with the information they need. The need for the academic libraries to fortify their information resources cannot be over-emphasized. One of the major findings is that some of the users visit the libraries without being well guided. Another indication is lack of adequate space in the libraries for displays of current materials. What this entails is that the users appreciate the importance of information dissemination to them and the libraries should therefore endeavour to re-activate its patterns of information dissemination for effective services to the users.

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

- (i) The libraries information resources should be up-dated from time to time.
- (ii) Subject specialist librarians should be involved in cataloguing and compilation of bibliographical sources.
- (iii) Library guides should be made available to users and guides be placed at strategic service points in the libraries.
- (iv) Accession Lists should be circulated to various departments and faculties for their information.
- (v) Available space should be provided for the display of recent acquisition.
- (vi) The group and individual profiles should very often be updated.
- (vii) The libraries need to improve on some of its patterns of information dissemination with more emphasis on Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) and Current Awareness Service (CAS).
- (viii) Automation of library services will ensure accuracy, reliability, speed and many more.

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