Article

USE OF LAW LIBRARY INFORMATION RESOURCES: A STUDY OF BABCOCK UNIVERSITY LAW STUDENTS

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Abstract

The paper is a case study of how undergraduate law students of Babcock University, Iperu-Remo, Oguns State make use of the law library information resources. The objective of the study was to determine the extent to which law students use the law library information resources of Babcock University Law Library. The descriptive survey is the research method used for this study. The population of this study consisted of undergraduate law students of Babcock University, Ilperu-Remo, Ogun State in the 2012/2013 academic session. The 2012/2013 academic session has two hundred and sixty-three (263) registered law students. The sample population of 130 was used. The population is grade up of 100 level to 500 level. One hundred and thirty (130) questionnaire items were administered to the students using random sampling technique. Out of these, 110 was returned representing 85% rate of response. Data collected were analysed using frequency count and simple percentage. The study shows that law students use Babcock University Law Library resources occasionally, and they use it mainly for internet purpose and to do their assignments. They also use it to study for examinations/tests, to read newspapers and magazines, to photocopy, for borrowing purposes, to supplement lecture notes, complete project, and to prepare for moot court. The least reason that the respondents use Babcock University law library resources was to prepare for seminar presentations which attracted 3.6%. The study also showed that there are more law students that are highly dissatisfied (28.1%) than those that are highly satisfied (7.3%).

Keywords: Law library, information resources, law students, Babcock University

Introduction

Babcock University School of Law, Iperu-Remo, OGUN State, was founded in 2004 as a mini-campus of Babcock University, Illisan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria by the Seventh Day Adventist-a Christian organization notable for its involvement in the establishment of credible centres of quality education at all levels. Babcock University Law Library was founded alongside the Babcock University School of Law (School of Law and Security Studies, Babcock University, n. d). It is a mono-discipline library that serves primarily the interests of law faculty and students. The Law Library is an integral part of the Babcock University School of Law. It is committed to the growth of academic excellence by providing resources that facilitate legal and law-related studies and research. Amongst its resources are statutes, law reports, law text-books, reference books, journals, magazines, newspapers, research projects, non-legal textbooks that have bearing on legal research, electronic legal databases (law pavilion, Hein online and lexisnexis). These electronic databases supply substantial among of primary and secondary sources of information.

The concept of life is vague without information as information has enabled man to perform his routine activities in an efficient way (Khan, Bhatti & Khan 2011). The legal profession thrives on information. Law libraries exist to provide information resources in diverse formats to support research, teaching and development of prospective legal practitioners. Libraries play a great role in national development through the support they offer to the education sector. Without libraries there as well can be no universities (Achitabwino, 2007). It is no gainsaying that the libraries are vital to the provision of information in various formats to enable educational institution to produce intellectuals that would greatly impact the national development of civilized nation. It is therefore sensible to claim that the quality of information resources acquired, organized, preserved and made available by any library is key to producing sound intellectuals. Feather and Sturges (2003) aver that academic law libraries exist primarily to support the teaching and research of the university it serves.

Typically, academic law libraries hold a comprehensive collection of legislation, case law, legal textbooks and academic law journals, supplemented by access to electronic legal databases. To accomplish their educational objectives, law students need to make effective use of the library resources relevant to their studies (Olorunfemi, Mostert & Ocholla, 2012).

It may be necessary to emphasize that the aim of Babcock University Law Library is to support the teaching, research and learning of the School of Law and Security studies of this University.

Objectives of the Study

The board objective of this study was to determine the extent to which law students use the law library resource of Backcock University.

The study will specifically:

(i)   Find out the purpose(s) for which law students in Babcock University use the law library.

(ii) Find out the frequency of use of library resources by Babcock University law students.

(iii) Investigate the types of library resources Law students use at the Babcock University Law Library.

(iv) Identify the challenges in using the Babcock University Law Library.

(v)   Suggest ways of improving the library services to the users.

Literature Review Role of Law Library in Legal Education

Dada (2010) avers that the indispensability of a law library to the effective practice of law has been universally acknowledged. He quotes Frank Gilbert as follows:

"There is no class of men, professional or otherwise so dependent upon books as the lawyers. There is no library of whatsoever kind or nature which so directly pertains to the interests which it is designed to serve as the law library. I am speaking with authority when I say the lawyer's books are his tools without which he would be unable to provide for himself and his family" (pp 5).

This underscores the very vital importance of the law library. And of course, books in the context of the present realities refer to information materials (electronic or otherwise). Obilade (1979) asserts that law libraries are essential to the proper study of law. Libraries are regarded as tools for academic excellence, and the centre of intellectual environment, serving as a convergence for both staff and students (Akintunde, 2009). Library is central to and it is in fact the laboratory for the legal profession. As the legal profession expands, so are the law library facilities growing correspondingly by leaps and bounds (Dada 2011). Ajidahun (2010) opines that without a law library, lawyers and law professors cannot do their jobs. He pointed out that the Nigeria Council of Legal Education requires every university law library to have the

relevant, current, and adequate law books and periodicals before it can pass accreditation. Such legal materials consist of primary, secondary, and tertiary sources, both local and international. These materials are very expensive, but university law libraries must acquire them.

Levor (n. d) also lends her voice in this direction when she asserts that legal education renders the law library a research laboratory where students must perform the "experiments" of identifying the building blocks of successful legal analogies. From the first year on, students must be trained in navigating the law library. To graduate truly marketable professionals, the law school must develop within each and every student the capacity to use law library resources with skill and competence, so that they will be fully prepared to defend the property, life, and liberty of their clients. To this end, there must be a complete, well-organized, and well-maintained collection at hand.

Types of Law Library Information Resources

Law library information resources are the information carriers held by the law library to aid research, teaching, and learning of its users. It could be held electronically or in print form. Information resources do not appear to be restricted to information-held items. This agrees with the thought of Ossai (2010) when he said that information resources include the procedures, equipment, facilities, software and data that are designed, built, operate and maintained to collect, record, process, and store information. Notwithstanding, the definitions, information is an indispensable resource to scholars.

Feather & Sturges (2003) emphasize that typically academic law libraries hold a comprehensive collection of legislation, case law, legal textbooks, academic law journals supplement by access to electronic databases. Knowles & Thomas (2006) toll the same line when they assert that a law reports, along with a wide variety of academic journals and textbooks. They also add that it is a gateway to online collections of legal materials which include LestisNexis, Westlaw, Heinonline, Justis etc. Odiase, Unegbu & Haliso (2001) assert that the library resource provides access to the holdings of the library. Knowles & Thomas (2006) add that online library catalogue serves as a guide to the estent of the print and online materials.

Services in the Law Library

As a law library in a university system is always considered as a part of the main library, all the services provided in other sections or branches are also provided in the law library. These include such services as routine of current law journals, selective dissemination of information, abstracting and indexing service, bibliographies and reading lists, reference services (Anyaogu & Agidi 2012). However, there are some specialized services available in the law library. They are highlighted by Bradley, Cownie, Masson, Neal & Newell (2005) to include finding cases, using law reports, updating cases, using electronic retrieval facilities (LexisNexis, Westlaw, HeinOnline etc), finding and updating statutes etc.

Factors that Impact on the Use of Legal Resources

Olorunsola (2009) listed exhaustively the factors that encourage people to use the library. Some of these factors are:

i.   The size and currency of the collection.
ii.   Availability of Information Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure.
iii.   Conducive learning environment.
iv.   Well trained staff.

On their part, Atman & Weils (2006) enumerated the factors that are capable of affecting adversely the use of library. They are:

i.   Reading in an unconducive environment.
ii.   Lack of written procedure and manuals that can direct non trained library staff. These results in frequent misshelving of materials and a lack of commitment in doing desk work. A user who is sensitive to any of these conditions may lose interest in using the library.

Apotiade (2002) sees inadequate & unqualified strafing as a hindrance to the use of library information. Krolak (2005) believes that the quality of library service depends on the professional quality of the staff. Apotiade (2002) also identifies insufficient space as another factor that inhibits use of library resources.

Methodology

The descriptive survey is the research method used for this study. The population of this study consisted of undergraduate law students of Babcock University, Iperu-Remo, Ogun State in the 2012/2013 academic session. The 2012/2013 academic session has two

hundred and sixty-three registered law students. A breakdown of this population is shown in Table 1 below.

The sample population of 130 was used. The population consisted of students from every level (100 level to 500 level). One hundred and thirty questionnaire items were administered to the students using random sampling techniques. Out of the one hundred and thirty questionnaire items administered to the students, one hundred and ten were returned representing 85% rate of response.

Table 1: Population and Sample Size

LEVEL	POPULATION	SAMPLE SIZE
100	61	35
200	53	25
300	52	25
400	50	25
500	47	20
TOTAL	**263**	**130**

Table 2: Frequency of Library Use

	FREQUENCY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
A	Daily	21	19.1%
B	Once a week	5	4.5%
C	2 – 3times a week	32	29.1%
D	Once a Month	5	4.5%
E	Twice a Month	2	1.8%
F	Occasionally	40	36.4%
G	Not at all	4	3.6%
H	No response	1	1%
	TOTAL	**110**	**100%**

The response of 36.4% showed that more of the students visit the library occasionally. 29.1% of respondents visit the library 2 – 3 times a week, 19.1% visit daily, 4.5% once a week, 4.5% once a month, while 3.6% do not visit at all.

Table 3: Reasons for Using the Law Library

	INFORMATION RESOURCES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
a	To read newspapers and magazines	47	42.7%
b	To study for examination/tests	62	56.4%
c	To do assignments	67	60.9%
d	To complete project	13	11.8%
e	To supplement lecture notes given by lecturers	28	25.5%
f	To borrow books	34	30.9%
g	To use internet facility	67	60.9%
h	To prepare for seminar presentations	4	3.6%
i	To prepare for moot court	7	6.47%
j	To photocopy	41	37.3%

The table 3 revealed that 60.9% of the respondents use the library either for the library's internet facility or to do assignments. 56.4% of the respondents use the library to study for examinations/tests, 42.7% use it to read newspapers and magazines, 37.3% to photocopy, and 30.9% use it for borrowing purposes. 25.5% use it to supplement lecture notes given by lecturers, 11.8% use the library to complete project, and 6.47% use it to prepare for moot court. The least reason that the respondents use Babcock University Law Library resources was to prepare for seminar presentations which attracted 3.6%.

Table 4: Types of Law Library Resources Used

	INFORMATION RESOURCES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
a	Textbooks	77	70%
b	Law journals	29	26.4%
c	Law reports	58	52.7%
d	Newspapers and magazines	38	34.5%
e	Projects	14	12.7%
f	Legislation (statures, laws, decrees, indexes etc)	24	21.8%
g	Electronic databases	27	24.5%
h	e-mail facility	28	25.4%
i	To prepare for moot court	19	17.2%

From table 4, textbooks were the mostly used resources with the highest percentage of 70, followed by Law reports which attracted a response rate of 52.7%. The least used resources are projects. This is understandable since it is mostly final year students that utilize project.

Table 5: Benefits of Using the Law Library

	BENEFITS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
a	Enriched lecture notes	32	29%
b	Completion of assignment	54	49%
c	Privileges of borrowing materials	35	32%
d	Well prepared for examinations/tests	38	35%
e	Enriched research	34	31%
f	Completion of projects	15	14%
g	Well prepared for moot court	6	5.5%
h	Well prepared for seminar	5	4.5%

From table 4, 49% indicated that they enjoyed the benefit of completing their assignments while 35% enjoyed the benefit of preparing well for examinations/tests. 32% enjoyed privileges of borrowing law library materials. Enriched research and enriched lecture notes followed with 31% and 29% respectively. 14% use it for completion of projects, 5.5% to prepare well for moot court and 4.5% to prepare for seminar.

Table 6: Challenges of Law Students in Using the Law Library Resources

	CHALLENGES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
a	Unavailability of desired materials (books, journals, etc)	67	61%
b	Electricity interruption	62	56.4%
c	Inadequate seating capacity	21	19%
d	Non-availability of electronic resources	30	27%
e	Poor lighting	14	13%
f	Lack of access to internet facility	35	32%
g	Unfriendly attitude of library staff	16	14.5%
h	Library environment not conducive	9	8.2%

The study revealed that unavailability of desired materials (books, journals, etc) is the strongest challenge to the students (61%). The second highest challenge which attracted 56.4% of response is electricity interruption, followed by lack of access to internet facility which attracted 32% and non-availability of electronic resources with 27%. Inadequate seating capacity attracted 19%, while unfriendly attitude of library staff was 14.5%. The inconducive environment of the library attracted the least response of 8.2% followed by poor lighting with a response percentage of 13%.

Table 7: Level of Satisfaction with Law Library Resources

	INFORMATION RESOURCES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
a	Highly satisfied	8	7.3%
b	Satisfied	43	39.1%
c	Unsatisfied	31	28.1%
d	Highly unsatisfied	7	6.4%
e	Undecided	18	16.4%
f	No response	3	2.7%

From table 7, 39.1% of respondents were satisfied with the information resources in the library while 28.1% were unsatisfied. While 7.3% of respondents were highly satisfied, 6.4% were highly unsatisfied. 16.4% of respondents were undecided. 2.7% did not respond.

Discussion

The study showed that the highest number of law students representing 36.4% use the law library occasionally, followed by those who use it 2 to 3 times a week which attracted 29.1%. The study also indicated that law students of Babcock University use the law library resources primarily for internet and to do their assignments. This is in accordance with the submission of Olorunfemi, Mosert & Ocholla (2012) that law students mainly use the library either as a reading place or where they can write assignments. However, this finding is contrary to the finding of Ossai (2011) that law students use law library resources to keep up with current development and update their knowledge. Law students also use the law library to study for examination/ tests, read newspapers and magazines, photocopy, borrow books, supplement lecture notes given by lecturers, complete project, prepare for moot court and to prepare for seminar presentations.

Amongst the benefits derived from using the Babcock University Law Library, completion of assignments ranked highest, followed by preparation for examination/tests. Other benefits include the privilege of borrowing library materials, enriched research and enriched lecture notes.

The study has shown that the biggest challenge in the use of the law library resources is unavailability of desired materials. This explains why a high percentage of law students use the law library occasionally. The second biggest challenge is electricity interruption. Fasae (2011) found in his study that electricity interruption is a big challenge.

The study also showed that there are more law students that are highly dissatisfied (28.1%) than those highly satisfied (7.3%).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study has provided insight into the use of law library information resources by law. The study indicated that law resources occasionally, and they use it primarily for internet and to do their assignments. The study also showed there are more law students that are highly dissatisfied (28.1%) than those that are highly classified (7.3%) with the law library resources. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made.

1. The law library should be stocked with relevant and current information resources.
2. It should create awareness amongst the law students on the various law library resources available for use.
3. Since the majority of the students come to the law library to use the Internet, more legal electronic databases should be provided.
4. The University needs to ensure that electricity supply is in a stabilized stated.
5. The library has to make provision for adequate seating capacity.
6. Proper lighting needs to be provided.
7. The library has to ensure that the law students enjoy access to internet facility.
8. The library staff needs to be courteous and friendly to library users.
9. Library environment needs to be made conducive for use of materials.

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