

Full Length Research

User Education in Academic Libraries and the Information Seeking Behavior of Users

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University libraries are established to provide resources and materials for studying but students in Nigeria are not encouraged to effectively make use of them. The growth and academic excellence of a University depends on the Library that serves the institution, hence the importance of user education for proper and efficient usage of the Library. This paper drew out the importance of user education on students. Statistical data were collected through the use of questionnaire administered to one hundred and fifty (150) respondents from two Universities in Nigeria using stratified random sampling technique. Out of this number, only one hundred and thirty two (132) copies of the questionnaires with adequate information were retrieved. Data for the study were analyzed using simple percentage. The findings revealed amidst others that though more than half of the respondents do not attend Library lectures regularly yet the course has positively influenced the utilization of the library resources. It was therefore recommended that practical lectures should also be organized at the University library to further enhance the students' use of the catalogue and other library resources. It was also observed that the user education program is very essential to the academic excellence of students. Universities should also be encouraged to organize seminars and workshops for student and staff to educate them on new trends and improve their skills on utilization of library resources. The Library staff should be more friendly and ready to assist in other to encourage Library usage.

Keywords: Library instructions, User education, Library resources, Information explosion

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INTRODUCTION

User education is a process of activities involved in making the users of the library conscious about the value of information in everyday life to develop interest among the users to seek information as and when they are needed. Aina (2004) opines that user education is meant to teach library users on how to acquire information they need as well as developing the skills to make use of the resources of the library independently and appropriately. They are the instructions given to users to make them more efficient and effective when making use of the resources of the library. User education is a process

whereby potential users of the library are made to learn how to make efficient and effective use of the library and its resources. (Iheaturu, 2012)

User education has been made more important as a result of Information explosion because information seekers are faced with an overload of information. There is a need to guide students on how to search for information materials so as not to waste the time of the users.

The purpose of user education is to train the students on how to make use of the library resources effectively by

enabling users to learn the necessary skills of independent library usage and to encourage users to seek the assistance of Library professionals when the need arises. Library users should be attended to when the need arises so as to prevent frustration and lack of interest.

The library is an important component of the university system, staff and students rely on the university library for research purpose and academic excellence. It is important that librarians pay attention to this. It is essential for students, lecturers and researchers to retrieve information quickly and correctly. The right and timely information to the right users will bring about knowledge and research development. In order to serve the information users efficiently, they must be taught on how to make use of the library effectively.

LITERATURE REVIEW

User education is the process of imparting knowledge so as to make library users effectively utilize library resources. User education can also be referred to as reader or Library instruction, library orientation, use of library, library and information skill.

Library user education teaches how to make the most effective use of the Library system. It involves all activities undertaken to help users become efficient users of information. The users are taught on how to identify information need and find it, evaluate and select the best information to meet that need (Tiefel, 1995). Edoke (2000) asserts that the objective of user education is to assist the users make the best use of the library resources.

The main purpose of the Library instruction program is to improve the student's awareness of the library and the entirety of what the library has to offer, it also provides users the opportunity to improve their retrieval skills.

It is important for the librarians to improve on the library instruction program. There is a rapid development of information technology, this makes the library to be more computer technology inclined such as the system software.

According to Ali (2005), a number of users are facing lot of problems while using electronic information resources, such as lack of knowledge about the resources, lack of trained staff and inadequate terminals. Also Wills (1990) also agreed to these problems when he identified lack of information retrieval skills for making use of electronic resources, which as a result affects the level of usage of resources by students. In his study, he found that majority of students sampled could not make use of a computer, that the use of database was poor due to lack of awareness, lack of access to computers, insufficient training and the high cost of provision. Users must be taught on how to make use of electronic

materials and retrieve materials electronically.

Higher education is fast changing and getting more complex from the method of teaching to curriculum of lectures, as a result of these Libraries collections should also increase along and technological developments in handling and retrieving techniques so as to directly influence the academic performance of students.

Library is important in higher institutions, a Library is the platform where students achieve academic success, librarians should teach students who does not have any prior knowledge of information retrieval skills before entering the university the needed skills to make use of the library resources. Kari (2004) stated that information skill is necessary for students so as to equip them with knowledge to cope with the demands of information. Students are encouraged to have a wide knowledge of information skills.

Majority of the new students in the university does not have knowledge of Library usage just as Clarke (1999) suggested that Third World countries, in the majority of cases, does not have enough public libraries that could efficiently serve as a necessary addition to the teaching and learning process in secondary schools. Even the available public libraries do not have user instruction for new users. As a result of this the responsibility lies on the university Libraries to ensure efficient teaching of the use of Library for proper utilization.

Muogilim (1986) investigated why students still find library usage difficult after taking the Library instruction program. The outcome of his findings shows that students hardly interact with the library and its staff during the orientation program. Also, they were overloaded with so much information within such a short period of time that the chances of retention of new information are quite slim. He concludes that high enrolment with inadequate physical facilities made effective work difficult.

User education is very important, it helps to publicize library services and improve the image of the library. Ogwu (2010) in his study of the impact of library studies at Kogi State College of Education observes that majority of the students do not attend lectures. Majority of the student does not take Library course seriously majorly because most schools take the course as an elective program.

Akinbola (2007) opines that library instruction programs should be made to be more relevant. The course should be taken by qualified librarians and the course should be made more practical. There is a need to educate and train students so as to meet their information requirements (Babakasi, 1998). According to Suleiman (2012) it was also observed that in order to increase the standard of the library program, there should be an increase in the number of skilled librarians.

User education is done through course program, handbooks or manual, seminars, workshops and tours. Students of higher institutions are taught on the use of

library through these methods.

Library staff should be ready to attend to students at all times in a friendly manner, this will encourage the students continue to make use of the library and the library resources.

Libraries should make sure that their services show proper level of customer care and that the information given to the users is useful and at the right level. Flaharty and smith (2007) further stated that library staff needs to make an enabling environment for the staff to feel welcome at all times.

To be able to handle library resources that are available, users must be taught on how to make use of these resources. User education is necessary for students to be able to locate and retrieve information in the library manually and electronically. Librarians are expected to find out the needs of the users, interaction with the users would provide library professionals the relevant information needed (Loho, 1992)

User education is changing as a result of changes in concepts of information use and understanding. Librarians are adapting to the concepts of information and communication technology literacy. (Kenney, 2006). The level and standard of user education depends on how independent students are in searching and retrieving information materials with little or no supervision. (Singh et al, 2009).

Koenig and Nicholas (2003) opined that students in higher education institutions need user education because pattern of courses are becoming interdisciplinary, use of library resources and retrieval of information becomes easy and less frustrating for students who have gone through the library instruction program.

Ozoemelem (2009) stated that information users must learn how to retrieve information from electronic resources. Adeyemi (2002) further stated that electronic literature is very important for students and researchers due to the vast amount of data it contains. The huge amount of information at their disposal enable students to have an in depth view of the research topic

McGuigan (2001) stated that computer awareness of students before admission into higher institution helps users in making use of electronic resources in the library

After the user education program, students must continue to make use of library resources. According to Mutshewa (2008), knowledge and skill are improved through the use and practice of the library resources.

OBJECTIVES AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This paper examined the methods of user education in academic libraries and the information seeking behavior of the users in libraries. In other to achieve this general objective, the following specific objectives were

developed to

1. Find out if the acquired knowledge has enhanced users in exploiting the library resources effectively
2. Know if users are encouraged to seek assistance of library professionals
3. Examine if users have the necessary skills for retrieving required information materials.
4. Find out if the acquired knowledge has enhanced the use of various sources of information in the library.

Several factors make this paper of this nature very significant. Foremost of these is the fact that there are relatively few studies on the user education and the information seeking behavior of users in academic libraries in Nigeria. This report will therefore go a long way in filling this gap. Since Academic libraries support the teaching and research needs of institutions they serve, the responsibility lies on the library to ensure that the use of information materials, resources and services are maximized to benefit the users, hence there is a necessity for user education programs.

METHODOLOGY

A survey design was chosen for this paper. This is in line with Babbie (2004) submission that the survey approach allows the investigator to draw on a large sample that is representative of the total population. The study is limited to 300 level undergraduate students in two Universities namely: Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, The research instrument used for the study is questionnaire and was designed and used to collect data for the study. One hundred and fifty (150) copies of questionnaire were administered to the targeted respondents at the various Universities. Seventy five (75) respondents each were selected from the two Universities using stratified random sampling technique. Out of the 150 questionnaire, 132 were retrieved, fully completed and were found usable. This represents 88% which was considered well enough for the study. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the frequency distribution of respondent's gender. 52% of the sample population is male while 48% represents the female population. This reveals that there were more male respondents than female respondents.

Table 2 shows the frequency distribution of responses acquired from the universities. Out of the 75

Table 1. frequency distribution of respondent's gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	69	52
Female	63	48
Total	132	100

Table 2. Frequency distribution of responses acquired from the Universities.

No	Names of responded Universities	Frequency	Percentage
1	Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife.	65	49
2	Ekiti- State University	67	51
Total		132	100

Table 3. level of awareness and effective use of the library resources

Items	Yes	%	No	%
I am aware of the OPAC in the Library	104	79	28	21
I can make use of the OPAC	88	67	22	17
I make use of the reference materials	110	83	22	17

Table 4. Perception of library users about the use of the library and the library professionals

Items	Yes	%	No	%
Library staff are friendly towards me	98	74	34	26
I seek the assistance of library staff	86	65	46	35
I am satisfied when they offer assistance	111	84	20	15
I get frustrated when making use of the library	34	26	98	74
I don't like asking questions from Library staff	43	33	89	67

questionnaires prepared for Obafemi Awolowo University, 65 questionnaires (49%) were recovered. 67 questionnaires (51%) were retrieved from Ekiti-state University from a total of 75.

Table 3 shows the level of awareness and effective use of the Library resources. The table 3 shows that 79% of the respondents are familiar with the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) but just 67% can make use of it. This is in line with Babakasi (1998) who said students need help and guidance in other to meet their information requirements, students need training on how to find information materials so that they make use of Library resources.

Table 4 elicits information about the perception of Library users about the use of the library and the Library professionals. 74% believes the Library staff are friendly towards them. This is in line with with Fleharty and Smith (2007) who stated that users need to feel welcome and the library staff has an obligation to make the library user-friendly.

Also 65% seeks the assistance of the library staff and 84% is satisfied with the assistance rendered. 26% gets frustrated when making use of the Library and 33% don't

like asking questions.

Table 5 elicits information about the level of user's skill of retrieving information. 55% of respondents indicated that after user education they are able to find information they need in the Library, this is line with Babakasi (1998) who stated that students need training on how to find information materials so that they make use of Library resources. Also 54% of the respondents indicated that the user education has improved their searching and retrieval skills, this is in line with Singh et al (2009) that stated that the quality of the services of the Library depends on the efficiency of knowledge retrieval methods and tools adopted by the libraries as well as skills and awareness of the users. Also in table 3, 44 % of respondents indicated that they can make use of the online database, this is in line with Ali (2005) who stated that a sizable number of users are facing problems while using electronic information resources because of lack knowledge about the resources. In the study 55% knows how to make use of the Library catalogue box while 53% indicated that they are fast in locating the catalogue card.

Table 6 elicits information about the perception of students on the methods of user education. 86%

Table 5. user's skills of retrieving information

Items	Yes	%	No	%
After user education am able to find relevant information I need	76	58	56	42
It helped me to increase my searching and retrieval skills	71	54	61	46
I know how to make use of the library catalogue box	73	55	59	45
I am fast in locating required catalogue card	70	53	62	47
I know how to make use of the online database resources available in the library	58	44	74	56

Table 6. perception of students on the methods of user education

Items	Yes	%	No	%
I was at the library tour and orientation as a fresher	113	86	19	14
The library tour and orientation was too congested	108	82	18	14
I attended Library class regularly	60	45	72	55
Is the class timetable convenient for you	107	81	25	19
Library course do clash with my main course	105	80	27	20
Do you understand what is being taught in class	112	85	20	15
Is the training program relevant to your needs in the library	113	86	17	14
Does the library professional take practical class	13	10	116	90
Do you make use of the handbook given to you	89	67	43	33
Do you feel seminars and workshops about library use are needed	95	72	37	28
Do you read lecture notes on the library course	98	74	34	26
Will you take it more seriously if it is a credit based course	87	66	45	34

indicated that they attended the Library tour and orientation program as a fresher but 82% believes that the Library tour and orientation program was too congested. 86% of the respondents are of the opinion that the training program is relevant to their needs in the Library, this is in line with Loho (1992) who opined that it is expected of library personnel to interact with the users to find out what they need or what to know, and to provide them with the relevant information needed. Also in table 6, only 45% of respondents attend lecture regularly which is in line with Ogwu (2010) in his study who said majority of students do not attend lectures. 85% believes they understand what is being taught in class, this is in line with Kari (2004) who stated that information skill is necessary for students so as to equip them with knowledge to cope with information. It is important for students to have a vast knowledge of information skills. 67% makes use of the handbook given to them while 74% study their lecture notes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Library is an essential resource center in the university. The Library plays a major role in providing information for students, lecturers and researchers. It is of utmost importance for the information users to know how to locate and make use of these available information

materials and to locate these materials on time in order to avoid frustration.

It is necessary for the Library staff to accommodate the users in a friendly and pleasant manner so as to increase the number of the users and encourage Library usage. Librarians should embark on personnel development so that they can properly educate users especially on new trends and techniques. It is also important to encourage Library management in organizing seminars and workshops for students and other Library users. To improve Library resource utilization, it is recommended that practical classes should be added to the Library course, this will help in the usage of the Online Public Access catalogue (OPAC) catalogue box, online database, reference materials and so on.

Librarians should communicate better with faculty staff to know what information material is required in the Library. Also Library tour and orientation should not just be a day program so that it won't be congested and lastly University Management should be encouraged in changing the course to a credit based course.

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