

Full Length Research

Library Users Education: A Panacea for Academic Performance of Students of University Of Agriculture Makurdi

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This study examined the role of library users' education on the academic performance of students in University of Agriculture Makurdi. Four objectives were formulated and four research questions answered. Population for this study was 89 subjects comprising all staff both Professionals and Para-professionals from University of Agriculture Makurdi library and was used as sample for the study. Instrument used for data collection was restructured questionnaire. Data was collected and analysed using mean and standard deviation. Findings of the study revealed that library facilities impact on academic performance of users. There are also basic skills of searching for useful literature through reference services. Findings revealed challenges affecting use of reference services for future work. The study also found strategies for improving user education programmes of the libraries. The study concluded that availability and provision of the various types of user education to library users is very important for effective utilisation of the library resources and services. However, the study identifies challenges to effective use of library services. It was recommended that Adequate qualified staff should be employed since library services enhances good academic performance of users and adequate reference resources and services should be maintained in University of Agriculture Makurdi.

Key word: Library, Users Education and Academic performance

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INTRODUCTION

Library user education is one of the important services of the library organised for users of higher institutions of learning. It is an academic programme designed by academic libraries to educate her users especially users on how to effectively use library resources and services. User education quickens the efforts of the clientele in

retrieving and effectively utilising the library materials. The demand for the use of library resources calls for the need to ensure that users have effective and efficient access to these resources. User education is expected to offer to users the knowledge, skills and training on how to source and use the library system and services by

introducing them to the services offered by the physical library building of the university as viewed by (Nnamdi, 2010, Nithayanadam, 2006 and Maduako, 2013).

According to Akalumhe (2011), "A more holistic programme of user education is referred to as information literacy programme". Many academic libraries especially university and research libraries emphasise the need for users to acquire skills that will enable them search for information independently on any aspect of knowledge using both traditional and electronic methods of accessing information. Information literacy programme is geared towards attaining a common competence in the use of library and computer network technologies. User education therefore cannot be discussed without first discussing Information literacy because they are interwoven.

The explosion of information and information sources has informed modern societies of the growing importance of special skills in accessing and using information from different sources and media efficiently and effectively. Such skills are known as information literacy (IL) skills. Information Literacy (IL) has thus become one of the most vital sets of skills for the Twenty First Century. IL skills enable students succeed academically and help them to secure future job opportunities. An information literate person according to The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) is "able to recognise when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information". UNESCO defines information literacy as "... beacons of the Information Society, illuminating the courses to development, prosperity and freedom. Information literacy empowers people in all works of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a human basic right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion in all nations". Information literacy enables people to interpret and make informed judgements as users of information sources, as well as to become producers of information in their own right. Information literacy must be taught in the context of the overall process and instructions in information literacy skills must be integrated into the curriculum and reinforced both within and outside of the education system (Zaki, 2011 and Wang, 2012).

Library user education encompasses all types of activities designed to teach users about library services, facilities, organisation, resources, and search strategies in order to equip them with the basic skills to enable them to make optimal, efficient and independent use of information resources and services available in a given library (Adi, 2014). It is simply a planned process and technique that is aimed at equipping library users with the basic skills to enable them optimally use resources available in a given library or libraries. Guiding users on

how to use the library has become necessary because of the tremendous increase in volumes of publications as well as the resulting complexity of libraries and methods by which literature is organised and disseminated.

Library user education or library instruction "began in the nineteenth century, with instruction in library use offered by a number of libraries in the United States between 1876 and 1910 and then ramped up in the early twentieth century. Academic library instruction mushroomed during the 1960's and early 1970's. This resulted in the founding of the Library Orientation Exchange (LOEX), a non-profit, self-supporting educational clearinghouse, in the early 1970's. During the 1970's and 1980's, prior to the widespread public use of computers, [library instruction] went far beyond teaching the mechanics and identifying and locating materials in the physical library.... It focused on the physical library, as for the most part, that was all that users could try out during instruction. However, the goal was always teaching so that users would transfer what they learned to new situations, reference tools and environments new to them- that is, they would learn how to learn".

Library user education is an essential mechanism for ensuring and enhancing effective library and information use. User education programmes are designed to make library users independent and efficient in their search for materials to satisfy their information needs. However, without effective user education programme, the library use process may not be properly harnessed by the users (The Free Library, 2010, Rice, 2010 and Okoye, 2013). This hampers the efficient academic performance by students.

Academic performance is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has achieved their short or long-term educational goals (Wikinson, 2010). Academic performance is a way wherein a person excels in terms of school requirements, tasks, awards and achievements. Academic performance means being a successful student who does well in school and engages in student activities.

An observation by the researcher has shown that academic performance by most of the students in University of Agriculture has been very low. This is mostly traced from non-utilization of library resources and services that support academic work. It is believed that non-utilization of library resources and services is caused by poor user education. The study therefore examines the role of library in user education on the academic performance of students in University of Agriculture Makurdi.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of this study is to examine the role of library users' education on the academic performance of

students in University of Agriculture Makurdi. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. determine the impact of library facilities on academic performance of users
2. identify basic skills of searching for useful literature through reference services.
3. Identify the challenges affecting users of reference services for feature work.
4. identify strategies for improving user education programmes of the libraries

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. what is the impact of library facilities on academic performance of users
2. what are the basic skills of searching for useful literature through reference services.
3. What are the challenges affecting use of reference services for feature work?
4. What are strategies for improving user education programmes of the libraries

METHODOLOGY

The area of the study is Benue State. This study employed a survey research design. The population for this study was 89 subjects comprising all staff both Professionals and para-professional from University of Agriculture Makurdi library. There was no sampling for the study. The entire population was used for the study as sample because the population size could be handled effectively by the researcher.

The instrument for the study was a structured questionnaire titled "Library Users' Education on the Academic Performance of Students Questionnaire (LUEAPSQ). The instrument which was developed by the researcher was divided into six sections based on the research objectives. The questionnaire had restricted response options of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD) with corresponding values of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The data for this study will be collected by the researcher and 3 research assistants.

Data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics. Mean was used to answer the research questions. The bench mark for this was 2.50 ($4+3+2+1=10/4=2.50$). The decision rule was: any item with a mean value of 2.50 or above was regarded as agree while any item with a mean value of less than 2.50 was regarded as disagree.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1

What is the impact of library facilities on academic performance of users?

Result in Table 1 shows that all the 8 items had their mean values ranging from 2.67 to 3.08 and were above the bench mark of 2.50. Result also shows that standard deviation of respondents ranged from 0.84 to 1.29 which was an indication that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their responses on the impact of library facilities on academic performance of users.

Research Question 2

What are the basic skills of searching for useful literature through reference services?

Result in Table 2 shows that all the 7 items had their mean values ranging from 2.66 to 3.12 and were above the bench mark of 2.50. Result also shows that standard deviation of respondents ranged from 0.61 to 1.07 which was an indication that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their responses on the basic skills of searching for useful literature through reference services.

Research Question 3

What are the challenges affecting use of reference services for future work?

Result in Table 3 shows that all the 7 items had their mean values ranging from 2.76 to 3.38 and were above the bench mark of 2.50. Result also shows that standard deviation of respondents ranged from 0.62 to 1.34 which was an indication that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their responses on the challenges affecting use of reference services.

Research Question 4

What are strategies for improving user education programmes of the libraries?

Result in Table 4 shows that all the 5 items had their mean values ranging from 2.60 to 3.26 and were above the bench mark of 2.50. Result also shows that standard deviation of respondents ranged from 0.62 to 1.34 which was an indication that the respondents were not too far from the mean and from one another in their responses on the challenges affecting use of reference services.

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the impact of library facilities on academic performance of users

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
1	A strong library program can lead to higher student achievement	38	10	15	26	89	2.67	1.29	Agree
2	The quality of the collection has an impact on student learning	30	18	28	13	89	2.73	1.08	Agree
3	Test scores are higher when there is higher usage of the academic library	29	17	39	4	89	2.79	0.95	Agree
4	Collaborative relationships between classroom teachers and academic librarians have a significant impact on learning	28	35	13	13	89	2.88	1.02	Agree
5	Library resources and services help for planning of instructional units, resource collection development, and the provision of professional development for users	33	32	22	2	89	3.08	0.84	Agree
6	Librarians can make a positive difference to users' self-esteem	34	14	34	7	89	2.84	1.03	Agree
7	Library resources and services builds users' confidence	32	14	37	6	89	2.81	1.00	Agree
8	Library resources and services encourage independent and sense of responsibility in users	25	38	12	14	89	3.02	0.89	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the basic skills of searching for useful literature through reference services

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
9	Patent searching	45	22	10	12	89	2.83	1.01	Agree
10	Boolean logic which allows the use of AND, OR and NOT to search for items containing both terms, either term, or a term only if not accompanied by another term	4	59	15	11	89	3.12	1.07	Agree
11	Wildcards and truncation which involves substituting symbols for certain letters of a word so that the search engine will retrieve items with any letter in that spot in the word	33	42	5	9	89	2.63	0.75	Agree
12	Phrase searching where concepts are represented by a phrase rather than a single word	18	64	4	3	89	3.11	0.91	Agree
13	Proximity search allows the user to find documents only if the search terms appear near each other, within so many words or paragraphs, or adjacent to each other	13	63	6	7	89	3.09	0.61	Agree
14	Capitalization which is searching for proper names, search syntax that will distinguish capital from lower case letters will help narrow the search	19	24	43	3	89	2.92	0.72	Agree
15	Field searching where database records are divided up into fields	45	18	20	6	89	2.66	0.85	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the challenges affecting use of reference services

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
16	User behaviors and expectations	54	23	10	2	89	3.12	0.99	Agree
17	Inadequate qualified staff	55	20	6	8	89	3.34	1.02	Agree
18	Inadequate reference resources and services	63	6	15	5	89	3.38	0.95	Agree
19	Theft and mutilation of reference resources	63	6	15	5	89	3.43	0.96	Agree
20	Violation of library rules and regulations by patrons	57	3	11	18	89	3.11	1.25	Agree
21	Problem of the provision of effective reference services	50	30	2	7	89	3.52	0.62	Agree
22	Lack of knowledge of the existence of some reference services	24	37	11	17	89	2.76	1.05	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2018

Table 4: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the strategies for improving user education programmes of the libraries

S/N	Item Statement	SA	A	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Remarks
24	Employment of qualified staff/training of staff	29	35	13	12	89	2.91	1.01	Agree
25	Provision of adequate reference resources and services	25	20	28	16	89	2.60	1.08	Agree
26	More security should be taken to stop theft and mutilation in the library	19	24	43	3	89	2.66	0.85	Agree
27	Provision of effective reference services	45	23	20	1	89	3.26	0.84	Agree
28	Provision of qualified staff	45	23	4	17	89	3.08	1.15	Agree

Source: Field survey, 2018

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research question one was on the impact of library facilities on academic performance of users. Findings revealed that a strong library program can lead to higher student achievement, the quality of the collection has an impact on student learning, test scores are higher when there is higher usage of the academic library, collaborative relationships between users and librarians have a significant impact on learning, library resources and services help for planning of instructional units, resource collection development, and the provision of professional development for users, libraries can make a positive difference to users' self-esteem, library resources and services builds users' confidence and library resources and services encourage independence and sense of responsibility in users.

Research question two was on the basic skills of searching for useful literature through reference services. Findings revealed that, patent searching, boolean logic which allows the use of AND, OR and NOT to search for items containing both terms, either term, or a term only if

not accompanied by another term, wildcards and truncation which involves substituting symbols for certain letters of a word so that the search engine will retrieve items with *any* letter in that spot in the word, phrase searching where concepts are represented by a phrase rather than a single word, proximity search allows the user to find documents only if the search terms appear near each other, within so many words or paragraphs, or adjacent to each other, capitalization which is searching for proper names, search syntax that will distinguish capital from lower case letters will help narrow the search and field searching where database records are divided up into fields were the basic skills of searching for useful literature through reference services.

Research question three was on the challenges affecting use of reference services for future work. Findings of the study revealed that user behavior and expectations, inadequate qualified staff, inadequate reference resources and services, theft and mutilation of reference resources, violation of library rules and regulations by patrons, inadequate qualified staff, problem of the provision of effective reference services

and lack of knowledge of the existence of some reference services were the major challenges affecting use of reference services for future work.

Research question four was on the strategies for improving user education programmes of the libraries. Findings revealed that employment of qualified staff/training of staff, provision of adequate reference resources and services, more security should be taken to stop theft and mutilation in the library, provision of effective reference services and provision of qualified staff

CONCLUSION

The availability and provision of the various types of user education to library users is very important for effective utilisation of the library resources and services. This is to say that the provision of user education programme for library users cannot be underestimated. Impediment to effectiveness of library user education programmes reduces high academic performance of users. However, the study identifies challenges to effective use of library services such as inadequate qualified staff, inadequate reference resources and services, theft and mutilation of reference resources, violation of library rules and regulations by patrons. Appropriate strategies could be employed to improving user education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Adequate qualified staff should be employed since library services enhances good academic performance of users
2. Adequate reference resources and services should be maintained in academic libraries
3. Appropriate measures should be taken to prevent theft and mutilation of reference resources
4. Violators of library rules and regulations should be adequately penalised

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