

Full Length Research

Accessibility and Usage of Academic Libraries by Students of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi Edo State

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Accepted 22 July 2021

This study is on accessibility and usage of academic libraries by students: a case study of Auchi polytechnic. The design for this study is survey research. Three (3) research questions were raised. The population of the study was based on the entire students of Auchi Polytechnic. The sample size for the study was two thousand (2000). Relevant works of literatures were reviewed. The instrument used for the study was a questionnaire and the data collected were based on those who registered with the library in the 2013/2014 academic session who registered with the library. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the data collected. The study found out that a well-equipped academic library and its accessibility played a vital role in the academic pursuits of the students. It was discovered that the location of the library affects the accessibility and usage of library resources which eventually tells on the academic outcome of the students and students who used the library regularly improved in their academic pursuits. Recommendations include: location of the library close to lecture rooms through decentralization, library services on Sundays as well as a restructuring of the timetable for lectures.

Key words: Academic library; accessibility; Library usage.

Cite This Article As: Olalekan, S.O., Jimoh, L.F., Emmanuel O.O ((2021). Accessibility and Usage of Academic Libraries by Students of Auchi Polytechnic, Auchi Edo State. *Inter. J. Acad. Lib. Info. Sci.* 9(7): 349-355

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, knowledge has become a critical resource for development, because every other thing is dependent on it. It simply takes knowledge to do everything that is required in the transformation of the existence of man. In this respect, whether as individuals, or countries, education is the key to creating, adapting and spreading knowledge (World Bank 1999). A significant level or tier of education is tertiary education. As the key or engine of knowledge-driven development, tertiary education trained qualified and adaptable labor force, generate new knowledge and enhances the capacity to access existing stores of global knowledge as

well as to adapt that knowledge to local use (World Bank, 2002; Ojedokun 2007).

Just as education is the key to creating knowledge and tertiary education is a critical level in education, the position of libraries in education is becoming more important than ever before. With the quantum of information resources available in the world today which has been dubbed the "information age" the mediating role of libraries in selecting, acquiring, organizing, preserving, storing, retrieving, disseminating, and interpreting information resources (Jimoh, Haruna and Nwadioha, 2012; Bature, 2009) to target users have become more relevant. A segment of these target users is tertiary and higher education. According to Bello (2009), education in

higher or tertiary institutions is not solely teacher-oriented. Libraries serve as treasures and fountains of knowledge in the realm of higher institutions in fulfillment of their objective of dissemination of knowledge. Therefore, according to Aina (2004) libraries attached to post-secondary institutions are academic libraries. This is buttressed by Ola (2012); Ojedokun and Bature (2009) who described academic libraries as those found in institutions of higher learning such as universities, polytechnics, mono-technics and colleges of education. As an organ in these institutions, the academic libraries are considered as the hub around which all academic activities revolve

The importance of academic library accessibility and usage has and effects/impact on students' academic performance is visible and illustrated in many studies. The worth of a library should not be considered or judged in financial terms but on the provision information to its users (students, academic and non-academic staff). Lutz and Field (1998) asserted that the major purpose of the university is not profit, except in the ultimate sense of society profit. In the opinion of Eyiolorunshe and Eluwole, (2017) libraries play an important role in the intellectual development of an individual as well as the total development of a society.

Library is the destination where students feel the information hub of the institution, where they can extract information in peaceful and easiest way as Heinström and Todd (2006) argued that library as a quiet comfortable place where students can work independently and without distraction. Small and Snyder (2009) showed the priority of students that keep the book collection in order and maintain a quiet place for them to study with light and easy mind frame. Generally, academic library is an institution responsible for the acquisition, organization and storage of recorded knowledge in various media for study, research and consultation (Ternenge & Agipu, 2019).

Academic libraries also support their various institutions (universities, polytechnics and colleges of education) to achieve its academic missions (Hernon and Altman, 1998; Everest & Payne 2001; Kuh & Gonyea, 2003; Oakleaf, 2011). These missions are: teaching, learning and research Ola (2012), as well as community services (Aina 2004; Jimoh, Haruna and Nwadioha, 2012). In other words, a library will be adjudged good or otherwise by its ability to meet, to a large extent, the information needs of its community. To this end, academic libraries continue to strive to collect, store, organize and circulate all forms of recorded knowledge in order to satisfy both present and future information need of users (Eiriemiokhale & Ibeun, 2017).

Profile of Auchi Polytechnic and Its Library

Auchi Polytechnic was established in 1973 (and was

known) as Midwestern State of Nigerian Polytechnic. It was a direct offshoot of the former Midwest Technical College, which was established in 1964 by the British government. The name of the institution was changed to Auchi Polytechnic in 1974 on January 1, 1994, the Federal Government assumed full ownership of the Polytechnic.

Presently it has six (6) schools: School of Engineering, School of Art and Industrial Design, and School of Information and Communication Technology all in the main campus (Campus I) while School of Applied Science and School of Business Studies located in Campus II. And School of Environmental Studies located in Campus III.

Auchi polytechnic library is popularly called Central Library. The library has a collection of over 50,000 volumes of books, journals and online databases (Science Direct) which contains volumes of electronic journals and electronic books. It has a seating capacity of over 2,000. The Annex Library is sited in Campus II.

Membership is open to all registered students, academic, non-academic staff. When the polytechnic is in session the hours of service is 8:30am-9:00pm Mondays to Fridays. However, on Saturdays is from 8:00am-4:00pm. It opens 8:00am-4:00pm Mondays to Fridays when the school is not in the session. In other words, the library does not offer weekend services when the school is not in session.

Statement of the problem

It has been revealed that most of the students at various levels of education are not exposed to the use of library, especially while in their secondary school levels even when it is within their reach. It has also been discovered that students who access and use library often times have greater advantage over others in academic performance (Ekuoye 2007). The problem of lacking a culture of using the library has been compounded with the advent of Information and Communication Technology (I.C.T.) which has made some students to neglect the importance of library. This is to an extent that, a significant population of students in the higher institutions of learning do not bother to register with their libraries. When they register they do not use the library except during the examination period. It is their belief that the library lacks the relevant information materials to meet their needs that dissuades them from using the library. Polytechnic education is a two-tier programme leading to the award of National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) respectively with 1 year break between for Industrial Work Experience. With an average of 9 courses per semester, the time-table starts 8:00am and ends 4:00pm on a daily basis. This is coupled with the fact that majority of Auchi Polytechnic students stay off-campus. In addition, Auchi

polytechnic has two campuses. There is no library in campus II which hosts the most populated school (Business Studies). Distance to the library becomes a factor in this case. Thus, this study examined accessibility in relation to the usage of library by students.

Research Objectives

1. To examine how the library information resources affect its accessibility and usage by students
2. To study how the structure of the school time table affect the students to access and use of the library resources
3. To find out how the location of the library affect the accessibility and usage of the library Resources

Research Questions

1. Do the library information resources affect its accessibility and usage by students?
2. Does the structure of the school time table affect the students to access and use of the library resources?
3. Does the location of the library affect the accessibility and usage of the library resources?

Literature Review

A library is seen as a warehouse of knowledge; managed for present and future utilization. Library forms a vital part of the world's systems of education... (Oyelude, 2004). It is a place where the knowledge of the past and the present are stored and can be used/found to justify the future, if properly utilized (Ola, 2012). Suleiman and Hana (2018) in their opinion described library as a place where books and other educational materials are domicile so that students, teachers and other library users can make use of it. The library is a store house of information resources, provides more opportunities for students to acquire the required knowledge which facilitates their academic pursuits makes it imperative.

The more accessible the library is the more likely it will be used. This observation has been validated by empirical studies carried out by Later (1963), Allen (1968), and Rosenberg (1967). The users may encounter five possible types of accessibility such as conceptual, linguistic, critical, bibliographic and most importantly physical (Ugah, 2008). Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) noted that availability of information resources does not necessarily imply their accessibility, because the resources may be available but access may be prevented for one reason or the other. Institutional patrons and external users may be granted membership to access libraries, but multiple categories reflect differing levels of eligibility for privileges and services, joining or membership fees charged and restrictions on physical

access (Wilson, Neylon, Montgomery & Huang, 2019). Ugah (2008) who quoted Osundina (1974), who studied the relationship between accessibility and the library use by undergraduates in Nigeria and noted that the problem of students is not the question of wanting to use the library, but whether or not the university library can provide for their needs and whether there is access to what is provided. This assertion was buttressed in the later studies by Iyaro (2004) and Popoola (2008). Olowu (2004) identified natural and artificial barriers to free access to information. In a similar study by Oyediran-Tidings (2004) at Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, low use of library was observed. This was attributed to accessibility problem. Nnadozie and Nndozie (2008) warned that the availability of information resources and services do not automatically translate to information accessibility and use. In the augment of Neelamegham (1981) identified accessibility as one of the pre-requisites of information use, while Kuhlthau (1991) argued that the action of information seeking depends on the needs, the perceived accessibility, sources and information seeking habit.

Academic libraries promote higher reading achievement through access to books and free reading (Krashen, 1995). One other study of New York Comprehensive Center, (2011) explained that those institutes providing the increase access to the library through flexible scheduling found their students, 10% better performing in reading and 11% in writing on the particular test as compare to those institutes which provide less access.

Libraries make differences in students' lives when it comes to accessibility and usage (Keeling, et al. 2008). Whichever way, accessibility and usage of libraries play an important role in student achievement, curriculum development, and instruction (New York Comprehensive Centre, 2011)

Research Method

The research design for this study is a descriptive survey design. It involves the detail collection of data on the accessibility of academic libraries and its usage by students of Auchi Polytechnic. To achieve this, three (3) objectives and three (3) research questions were raised for the study. The population of the study was based on the entire students of Auchi Polytechnic. The sample size for the study was two thousand (2000). The sample was made up of the students from six (6) schools. These schools are: School of Engineering, School of Business Studies, School of Art and Industrial Design, School of Environmental Studies, School of Applied Science, and School of Information and Communication Technology. The instrument used for the study was questionnaire and the data collected were based on 2013/2014 academic session. Descriptive method was used to analyze the

data collected. This was complemented by examining relevant documents to obtain necessary information about the investigation. The likert scale was used to present the sub-variables for the analysis. Tables, frequencies and percentages were also used for data analysis, thereby enabling easier discussion and interpretation of data.

Findings and analyses

Two thousand (2000) questionnaires were administered to the students to collect information on the accessibility of academic libraries and its usage by students of Auchi Polytechnic, however, 1188 which represents 94.4% were returned. Therefore, analyses were based on the returned questionnaire.

Based on the data collected, they are presented in tabular form below:

ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

Respondents	Number of questionnaires administered	Number of questionnaires returned	Percentage (%)
STUDENTS	2000	1888	94.4

The table above shows that two thousand (2000) questionnaires were administered to the students and one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight (1888) were returned which represents ninety-four point four percent (94.4%) for analysis.

Research question 1

Do the library information resources affect its accessibility and usage by students?

Table 1.

Sub-variables	A	%	D	%
I have more access to library resources to complement my books and lecture notes.	1221	64.7	667	35.3
I will rather prefer to use library resources to do my assignment to my handouts.	1228	68.1	660	31.9
The library does not have enough information materials related to my field of study.	1005	53.2	883	46.8
Some of the library resources are obsolete; I prefer to use internet to complement what the library have.	1330	70.4	558	29.6
I feel comfortable and conducive to read my books and consult related materials in the library than at home/hostel.	1552	82.2	336	17.8
Total	1267	67.7	621	32.3

Table one above shows that (1267) which represents (67.7%) of respondents accepted that there is a relationship between library resources and its accessibility/usage by the student. While (621) representing (32.3%) disagreed. Consequently, this shows that the total percentage of students that 'agreed' to the sub-variables raised is greater than the total percentage that 'disagreed' to it. Therefore, there is a relationship between library resources and its accessibility/usage by the students.

The implication of this according to Saiful (2008) is that education and library are two inseparable- indivisible concepts, both being fundamentally and synchronically related and co-existent with each other. One cannot be separated from the other, and the existence of one and its accessibility is impossibility without the other.

Research Question 2

Does the structure of the school time table affect the students to access and use of the library resources?

Table 2

Sub-variables	A	%	D	%
I allotted a specific time for my study every day.	1441	76.3	447	23.7
The structure of the school time table does not encourage me to use library, especially during the day time.	1777	94.1	111	5.9
The time table structure is overloaded with double periods, practical works and long lectures; these affect the time I spend in the library.	1772	93.9	116	6.1
I visit the library more often during examination period because of the time table structure.	1882	99.7	6	0.3
I often spend more hours reading in the library, especially on Saturdays.	889	47.1	999	52.9
Total	1552	82.2	336	17.8

Table 2 above reveals that the structure of the school time table affects library usage of students of Auchu polytechnic. (1552) respondents representing (82.2%) of the responded to 'agree'. (336) respondents representing (17.8%) responded to 'disagree'.

In effect, the structure of time table has a greater effect on the accessibility and usage of library in Auchu polytechnic, which invariably affected their time of studies. This corresponds to the study of New York Comprehensive Center, (2011) which explained that those institutes providing the increase access to the library through flexible scheduling found their students 10% better performing in reading and 11% in writing on the particular test as compare to those institutes which providing less access.

Research question 3

Does the location of the library affect the accessibility and usage of the library resources?

Table 3

Sub-variables	A	%	D	%
I always find it difficult to visit library because of the location to my department/hostel/home to the library.	1774	93.9	114	6.1
The distance of the library makes it difficult for me to always access and use library resources.	1666	88.2	222	11.8
I find it easier to study in my hostel/room sometimes because of distance to the library.	1112	58.9	776	41.1
I find it difficult to study for long hours after I might have worked long distance to the library.	1221	64.7	667	35.3
The location of the library does not encourage me to have access and use library regularly.	1228	65.0	660	35.0
Total	1400	74.1	488	25.9

Table above reveals that (1400) respondents representing (74.1%) agreed that the location of the Central Library affects their accessibility to the library resources. On the other hand, (488) respondents which represent (25.9%) disagreed to the variable.

Consequently, this shows that there is higher percentage of students who actually agreed that the location of the library influences their accessibility to the library resources. This was buttressed by Nnadozie and Nndozie (2008) who warned that the availability of information resources and services do not automatically translate to information accessibility and use.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A thorough appraisal of accessibility of academic library and its usage by students of Auchu polytechnic, revealed,

that some of the students make concerted effort to use of the library to support their learning and research work, and it also revealed that there is a strong relationship between library accessibility and usage on their academic performance. This study also revealed that the school time table structure has a negative implication on the students' accessibility to library resources, especially after they might have received/concluded their lectures for the day, this invariably affected them to use the library. For instance, the double period and practical that were fixed for the same day affected them and made them to be tired to visit the library.

The result of the findings from the research questions affirmed it that a number of students want to access and use the library but the location of the central library is far from their reach, which made them often times visited library regularly during the examination period which implies that the students cannot have access to the

library regularly because of the location of the Central Library.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are hereby suggested for the improvement of accessibility and usage of the library by Auchu polytechnic students:

- The school time table should be well structured in such a way that the students do not get tired and therefore could have time to access and use library.
- The school management should as a matter of urgency complete the library at Campus II to give students there quick access to the library.
- Libraries should be located in proximity to lecture venues.
- The library should begin to offer to users on Sundays to accommodate those unable to access and use it on weekends due to crowded lecture timetable.
- The library should be well stocked with current information resources; both print and electronic to attract users.
- Internet facilities should be made accessible to students without any extra fees.
- The teaching of the course "Use of Library" should be made more robust through emphasis on practical.

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