

## USE OF LIBRARY KNOWLEDGE IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES; IMPACT ON UNDERGRADUATES' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Samuel J. Udoudoh

Department of Library and Information Technology  
School Of Information Communication and Technology  
Federal University Of Technology, Minna, Niger State  
E-mail: udoudoh\_samuel@yahoo.com

### ABSTRACT

*The study was designed to determine the use of library on undergraduates' performance. A reliable and validated 30 item questionnaire of the Yes/No type and the likert scale type was administered on 300 students comprising of 100, 200 and 300 level students of Selected Nigerian Universities across the six geo-political zone. The response rate was 252 and the results shows that most undergraduates of selected Nigerian universities students don't use the library for the resources it contains but use it more for studying and reading. It is therefore recommended that the acquisition of library use skills should be dissociated from GST (Use of English), and made to stand on its own.*

**Keywords:** Academic libraries, Knowledge, Performance, Undergraduates, Use of Library/User education, Library instruction, Library resources, Library skills, Research, Pursuit

**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CLASSIFICATION OUTLINE: Z665-718.8**

### 1. Introduction

Academic libraries are libraries located in institutions of higher learning namely: like colleges of education, polytechnics, universities and research institutions. Their major functions is to serve the academic needs of the institutions concern, especially in the area of provision of relevant and pertinent information resources to enhance learning in all ramifications, support study and research activities respectively (Garba 2004). Edoke (2000), posits that university libraries usually have large holdings covering a wide range of academic programmes/subjects offered by such higher institutions of run by such institution to assist learners/ or student carry out the use of the library and its information resources to better their academic pursuits to the maximum. To achieve the learning objectives of these institutions, librarians usually instruct the users, students and researchers on how best to make use of the library information resources. Based on this view Edoke (2000), Rathore (1992) are of the opinion that there is always a compelling need of user education, as an indispensable thing that should be adopted. Put simply user education is designed to educate all

library users, students, patrons or all users on the best ways to use the library and its services whenever need arise.

In his contribution, Ifidon (1990) maintains that libraries include the provision of learning resources and assistance for knowledge acquisition and teaching of research procedures governing writing in academic community. The author further stressed the essence of mounting of a course for users for effective and efficient use of the library, and how to gainfully exploit the use of library resources. Still on the use of library, the author stresses that it is aimed at imparting necessary knowledge to students to know the library and how to make effective and successful library use to enhance brilliant academic performance. Also Jager (2000), Macdonald and Michikas (1995), submitted that as far as undergraduate student are concerned, an academic institution legitimately teach undergraduate students how to make effective use of the library and develop students talent as the core demands of excellent academic endeavour.

Attesting to this Orr (2001) added also that through user education, the students are able to make appropriate use of the library resources in diverse field as well as developing the skills in exploiting maximum use of the resources of the library to the fullest for their brilliant academic achievement. Aina (2004) further added that user education assist users to get information in any field and develop the skills to use library resources independently as need arise. Oyedum (2006), Rathore (1992) equally opined that library instruction is a learning programmed given by the library. Olaniyan et al (2006) in their contribution stated that objectives of user education help to educate users on how best to explore the overall library resources. Nancy (2006) equally affirmed that the importance of library in education cannot be over emphasized. In the present context of vast and rapid expansion of knowledge and learning, though reading is steadily on the rise, what is mostly essential required for this is for the students to make use of their libraries.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The philosophy of the library instruction programme is to impact user skills and knowledge to students to equip them well with capacity to locate, retrieve, gather relevant information and maximise use of library resources. Expectedly, since the university libraries should provide ample opportunity and privilege to students and all users for optimum knowledge exploitation. Ajibero (1998) and Aguolu (2002) observed that Nigerian university libraries do not meet user expectations. As a result, most

students do not learn how to use the library and are not aware of the relationship of the library to their studies. This observation prompted the researcher examine whether Nigerian Universities adopts the use of library knowledge has been taught to all undergraduates of this great institution to full acquaint them with the skill to make the maximum utilization of the library in their learning.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Here a review of previous works and literature related to the subject matter under the following Sub themes are discussed to bring to light the relevance of the Use of library knowledge in academic attainment:-

- i. What is user education?
- ii. Birth of user education in Nigerian Universities
- iii. Perception of the use of library by undergraduates
- iv. Library instruction for undergraduates/ users
- v. Accessibility and use of library resources
- vi. Components of use of library skills
- vii. The library institution as organizer /disseminator of learning resources
- viii. The Library's role on Academic Pursuit.
- ix. Reading and Reading culture
- x. Library skills and Acquisition
- xi. Evaluation of User education programme
- xii. The importance of Library in the life of undergraduate learning process.

### • *What is user education?*

Breivik (2005) states that user education is a means of personal empowerment in today's Information rich environment. It allows people, verify, refute expert opinion, learn, critique, acquire knowledge and to become independent seekers of information. Lubans (2006) also stresses that several locally developed guidelines for instruction in library skills have been drawn up. He went further to say user education should include exposure to the use of library, the size of the library in the institution of higher learning, the resources and also their organization are complex so they must be introduced to it and with the expected increase in students enrolment, greater responsibility for finding materials belong to the students.

Boyer (1995) added that every undergraduate student should be introduced carefully to the full range of learning resources in institutions of higher learning. He also recommended that user education be taught to users in all institutions of higher learning. Nancy (2006) recommended that for the aim and objective of the library to be achieved, there is need for a programme of study to be introduced to students on the use of library in a form of library instruction program. Edoka (2000)

submitted that a carefully planned and executed user education programme would greatly ensure the realization of this objective.

The aims of such programme include:

- i. To develop readers awareness of the overall information resources available to them in their libraries.
- ii. To develop library skills necessary for retrieving required materials and knowledge acquisition.
- iii. To create a positive users attitude to information searching which will stimulate the user to make use of the resources available at academic libraries.
- iv. To sharpen the intellectual curiosity of undergraduates in their various field of study.

• ***Birth of User education in Nigerian Universities***

Lorezen (2003) quoted Nwoye and Anafulu (1973) giving details on a required course on libraries skills at the University of Nigeria. The course was a part of the general studies curriculum of the University. In addition Lorezen (2003) quoted Young (1966) describing the introduction of an orientation course in library use by the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria which was given to new students before commencement of their academic classes. The use of the reference room in the library increased dramatically showing the positive effect the course had on library skills and attitudes. Adledigba (1990), Lorezen (2003) wrote about the library instruction programs at a variety of academic institutions in Nigeria, but the emphasis was on agricultural libraries and their programs. Iroka (1990) gave the same type of overview for Nigerian Medical Schools, saying that a user education program was in their infancy stage.

In conclusion, Ajibero (1995) described how academic library instruction was a standard services offered by many Nigerian Universities. As such students would expect and desire a continuation of these programs into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and that libraries needed to fund them.

• ***Perception of the Use of Library by Undergraduates***

Some researchers observed that undergraduates are not using library (ies) exactly as expected or at least for the main purpose of information seeking. Whitmore (2001) stressed that there is low library use by students in higher institution of learning for effective location, gathering and retrieval of relevant information. However, Talbot, Lowell and Martin (1998) studied the satisfaction of undergraduate and found out that students used the library most often as a place of study than any other services. Whitmore (2001) also examined and agreed that undergraduate primarily use the academic library as a place of study.

Related to the study of library use, Grimes and Charter (2000) presented a preliminary investigation of campus library use by college students through a survey of 205 economics student, it sought to determine the average length of their weekly visits to the library and identify the major activities they pursued there. Results suggested that much of the time student spend in the library will most likely not result in the production of library skills that are frequently required for information retrieved and that library instruction may indeed increase student efficiency in the use of library resources.

- ***Library Instruction for Undergraduates in Tertiary Institutions***

Callison (1997), Joswick (1994), Tiefel (1995), Abowitz (1994), Malone and videon (1997) and Pelaez (2005) stressed generally and agreed that, library instruction is needed for easy, effective and efficient use of library resources. However, Tiefel (1995) argued that library user education has gained recognition for its importance, but it faces the challenge of remaining relevant in a time of technological change. He further goes on to say that programmes that teach students to find and use information in all formats are necessary. In his contribution Abowitz (1994) stated that one of the increasingly critical skills that students must master is how to retrieve information efficiently.

According to Vaffa (2000) libraries will increasingly need to help users find and retrieve information easily and provide guidance on which resources is best for their needs. Moore – Jensen (1997) concluded that library instruction has long been viewed as one of the most effective user education methods and in concluding the established that there is a relationship between students, use of library instruction and effective use of library resources for successful academic pursuit.

- ***Accessibility and Use of Library Resources***

The university library is the academic heart of the university system and its basic purpose students and other researchers with material and an enabling environment. According to Whitmore (2002) academic library resources are considered dependable means of an institution's excellence and quality. Popoola (2008) affirmed that the library resource available in institutions must be capable of supporting research activities among students. Iyoro (2004) in his study identified accessibility as one of the pre-requisites of information retrieval. Ugah (2008) opined that the more accessible information sources are, the more likely they are to be used, and the more use of library skills they passes, the more library resources is consulted.

Ugah (2008) quoted Osundina (1974), who studied the relationship between accessibility and library use by students in Nigeria noted that the problem of Nigeria students is not the question of wanting to use the library but whether or not the academic library can provide for their needs.

However, Seth and Parida (2006), Ugwu (2008), Nnadozie and Nnadozie (2008) cautioned that availability of information resources and services does not automatically translate to information accessibility and use. Ugwu (2008) explained further that the problems of transmission, and appropriate acquisition use of library skills have been combined with the problems of ease of information retrieval.

- **Components of Use of Library Skills**

Brown (2002) stated that to be productive, lifelong learners students must be able to locate and use information to make decisions, solve problems and to continue to grow. She further said that the purpose of the library skills component of the General Education Program is:

- To give students opportunities for independent learning / research experience in the library
- To ensure that all students graduating from university are equipped with the ability to locate, use and evaluate information in an efficient and ethical manner.

Wsu (2009) further added tips in including components of library skills in user education program, to include:-

- Provision of a detailed description of the library skills activity
- Making sure the programme requires the student to:
  - Locate information
  - Evaluate information and;
  - Use information
- Describe the types of sources student will use.
- Explaining the criteria that will be used in evaluating
- Explaining how much of the student grade is dependent upon the library skills.

- **The Library Institution as Organizer / Disseminator of Learning Resources**

According to Haas (2004) libraries are "Unique Vessels" of resources and fertile territory for consultation and retrieval of information. He also added that students found in a library are most often likely to be doing assignment; he or she is likely to think of the library as a site for efficient and effective use of library resources. This is not surprising, since libraries have historically functioned as corporate memories. Weatherly (2004) quoted Iscoes (1974) that libraries are accumulators,

organizers and disseminators of society's knowledge. They also serve transmitters of knowledge and access point for students seeking library resources. In conclusion Libraries are an essential link in this communication between the past, present, and future. Whether the cultural record is contained in books or in electronic formats, libraries ensure that the record is preserved and made available for effective use. Libraries provide people with access for easy retrieval.

- ***The Library's Role on Academic Pursuit***

Oyedum (2006) observed that academic library is one of the most important libraries in the world which have the characteristics to render the following services;

- i. Conservation of knowledge and ideas
- ii. Teaching services
- iii. Research
- iv. Publications

Edoka (2000) also added that the prime obligation of an academic library is to provide appropriate information resources for study and research to the students of its own institution. Lar (1999) supported that the University role is enhancing and supporting research through acquisition of books and journals based on requirement by the students of the parent University. But Whitmore (2003) resolved that the academic library resources are considered a good measure of an institution's excellence and quality. Popoola (2008) affirmed that the information resources and services available in institutional information system must be capable of supporting research activities among the students and the lecturers. In addition, Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) concluded that the libraries are often considered the most important resource centre of an academic institution. Also it support learning, and research in ways consistent with and supportive of the institution mission and goals.

- ***Reading and Reading Culture***

Busayo (2005) opines that if people read at all, it is not for the pleasure of reading; it is because they want to pass one examination or another, and hence the books they read are prescribed texts. As soon as they have passed their examinations, obtained their results, it is goodbye to reading of any sort of such materials. Adedeji (2000) observed that reading is needed for effective functioning in any given society. She affirms that reading is a tool for learning and studying and that it is an intellectual activity which helps to develop the mind and personality of human being. Some researchers Ikegbunam (2000); Ikeotuonye and Bashir (1998) point to poor reading culture as one of the major causes of poor academic performance in higher institutions. Okonkwo (2005) argued

that good reading culture have positive effect on academic performance. Nneji (2002) observed that the whole reading culture can be explained by the high dependency of students on handouts as the main source of information in the University. With handouts, students probably read verbatim and absorbed as much as possible the given information thoughtlessly. Idachaba (2009) quoted Dr. Jerry Agada, the National Vice President Association of Nigerian Authors and Former Minister of Education argued on the significance of reading by saying that reading makes a student, shape his focus to achieve set goals. He concluded that reading is an indispensable learning skill that lays the foundation for independent studies and prepare students for higher educational opportunity.

• **Library Skills and Acquisition**

According to Aina (2003) the library provides user education in order to equip a user with enough knowledge on the use of library. This will enable the user to use the library resources effectively and efficiently. He also added it could be imparted through one to one sessions, library orientation/tours or classroom instruction. Brown (2002) opined that the purpose of library skills is to inculcate in students the skills and capacity to be able to locate and relevant / pertinent information to solve problems, to develop in students' skills for independent learning and research experiences and to ensure that students are equipped with the ability to locate, use and retrieve information.

However, Dean (2000) outlined the library skills a student in a institution should possess the following:

- i. Classification and Arrangement of library materials
- ii. Catalogues
- iii. Source reference materials
- iv. The sections/units of the library
- v. Types of classification schemes
- vi. Serial, journals or periodicals

In addition, use of library skills and acquisition is deigned to enable student understand and appreciate the role of library in education.

- i. Importance and organization of the library
- ii. Introduction to cataloguing and classification
- iii. Type of library services
- iv. Bibliographic Control GST (Department) (2009).

• In conclusion, Alimohammadi and Sajjadi (2006) observed that the most common library skills include the following:

- i. Library tour
- ii. Instruction in subject heading an classification



- iii. Searching manual catalogues
- iv. Use of reference materials
- v. Using microform equipment
- vi. Assignments' instruction should finish with a theoretical/practical test.

• ***Evaluation of Use of Library***

An evaluation method was observed by Eckwright (1993), Watson (2007). The assessment was based wholly on students' feedback. The feedback was elicited on three areas: self reported confidence in information seeking the effectiveness of the instruction and the value of the programme. Lindauer (1998) noted the importance of overall performance an evaluation of the library. He published a review publication that viewed the library, its resources and its effectiveness as a contributing partner to the educational assessment of instructions.

Herman and Dugan (2002) discussed the critical need for libraries to include themselves in institutional effectiveness, assessments and also demonstrating that services provided direct impact on students' academic performance and increase an institution research effort. Roselle (2003), Ragains (1997) noted that the evaluation of library instruction programmes could be done through the survey of library instruction librarians and also the use of students' responses from students on their satisfaction with use of library skills. Brewer and Hills (2001) are of the opinion that it is significant that there are few references to evaluation and until very recently they have virtually non existent. This statement is no longer true because during recent years, librarians have become aware of the need of knowledge of use of library which Revil (2004) stated that here is need for proper evaluation of he instruction.

• ***The Library Importance on the Undergraduates' learning Process***

According to Hooks et al (2007) teaching students how to use the University library resources had been a challenge for academic librarians and has re-emerged as a high priority for student in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Alimohammadi and Sajjadi (2006) added that library and information professionals have experienced the information seeking of undergraduates and suggested a wide range of library skills to improve on their learning process. Lisa (2005) observed that the library is a reservoir of knowledge, information and human experiences and it also make provision for accessing the information. They play a key note in creating literature environments and literacy by offering relevant and attractive reading materials for all literacy level. Osunrinde, Adekiya and Adeyemo (2000) reveal that library has many benefits which can be of immense use to students in institutions.