

REFERENCE SOURCES, SERVICES PROVISION AND USE IN THREE ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN SOKOTO STATE

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Abstract

This study investigates reference sources, services provided and use in three academic libraries in Sokoto State. The study is pivoted upon three (3) objectives to ascertain types of reference sources and services provided; reasons for using the reference sources and services; and level of users' satisfaction with the reference services provided by academic libraries in Sokoto State. The data collected were analysed using frequency counts, percentages and mean scores. Findings of the study revealed that the common available reference sources in three academic libraries in Sokoto State: were abstracts, almanacs, atlases, biographies, catalogues, dictionaries, encyclopaedias, maps, manuals and yearbooks. The available reference services offered were current awareness services, library instruction and ready reference services. The major reasons for using reference sources by patrons were reading for pleasure 139 (46%) and preparation for examination 138 (45%). It was also found that respondents were not satisfied with interlibrary loan, bibliography compilation and indexing and abstracting services but that they were satisfied with current awareness services, readers' advisory, library instruction, ready reference service and selective dissemination of information. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that the addition of indexes, bibliographies, interlibrary loan, indexing and improvement of abstracting services and virtual reference services would improve services and attract more patrons.

Introduction

The purpose of reference service in any library is to maximize the use of library by providing direct assistance to users to obtain with quick answers, directions, referring them to other information sources or teaching them on how to use various tools of the library and its resources, to satisfy information needs as they embark on class work, assignment, thesis or project. Reference sources can, therefore, be seen as an important library collection that facilitates the use of the library and the entire

information resources and also an avenue where the library can market and sell its products and services. This therefore makes reference services very tasking and requires study, training, practice and professionalism. Perhaps, this could be the reason why Adebayo (2009) stated that reference service is the most demanding aspect of librarianship whose performance can either make or mar the image of the library. Central to effective reference services provision is the availability of current, accurate and relevant reference sources such as

dictionary, encyclopaedia, atlases, directories, biographical sources, bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, etc.

Reference services, therefore, depend upon sound and quality reference collection and libraries cannot fully serve their clients without these information resources. Moreover, the availability and access to quality information resources is a prerequisite to the satisfaction of general library services. Reference sources can, therefore, be seen as tools for reference service delivery which due to their importance and peculiar nature are mostly not allowed to be circulated, hence are usually referred to within the confinement of the library for particular piece of information normally quick facts, biographic information, overview and general information. In view of the foregoing, the strategic role played by reference services in the library and the importance of reference sources in the provision and use of reference services together with the attendant problems of limited funding, poor acquisition of reference sources, poor reference services provision and poor utilisation of the sparingly available reference services provided by academic libraries in Nigeria it has become imperative to conduct a study assess the current situation of reference sources, services provision and use in academic libraries with a view to improvement, rendering better and more effective and user focused reference services in Nigerian academic libraries.

Statement of the Problem

Academic libraries are saddled with the responsibilities of not only making addition to the existing reference collection but also to ensure that these reference collections meet the information needs of users. Literature search revealed that write up on the availability and use of reference sources and services in academic libraries in Sokoto State is yet to be known not to talk of the level of users' satisfaction on the use of these collections. This study therefore seeks to find out the reference sources, provision of services and use in selected academic libraries in Sokoto state

Aim and objectives of the study

This study is aimed at assessing the reference sources, provision of services and use in academic libraries in Sokoto State. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the type of reference sources and services available and offered in academic libraries in Sokoto State.
2. Determine the reasons/purposes for using the reference sources offered in academic libraries in Sokoto State.
3. Find out the level of users' satisfaction with the reference services offered by academic libraries in Sokoto State.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What type of reference sources and services are available and offered in three academic libraries in Sokoto State?
2. What are the reasons/purposes for using the reference sources by library patrons in three academic libraries in Sokoto State?
3. What is the level of users' satisfaction with reference services offered by the three academic libraries in Sokoto State?

Literature Review

Reference service as depicted by Bopp and Smith (2011) is one of the library's basic functions, alongside collection, organisation of information materials and readers services. The service is concerned with linking library users with information resources through direct personal assistance. The Reference and User Services Association (RUSA) (2008) defined reference services as information consultations in which library recommend, interpret, evaluate, and/or use information resources to help others meet particular information needs. This views reference services to include all activities surrounding the creation, management and assessment of reference sources and services. In an article, Buckland (2008) pointed out two

Reference Services and Use

major functions of reference sources. The author posited that;

The reference collection is composed of resources selected to serve two needs: Looking up or verifying factual data, often referred to as "ready reference" and; Establishing an initial outline and context of any topic efficiently and effectively, especially determining the what, where, and who aspects of whatever is of interests (Buckland, 2008, p. 81-82).

Many studies were conducted on the use of reference sources and services in academic libraries across the globe. Ogunniyi, Efosa and Sheji (2013) in their study "the use of reference sources and services" reported that majority of library users have good understanding of what reference sources are and about 73% of the respondents make use of the reference sources. The study revealed further that encyclopedias and dictionaries have higher rates of usage than other reference sources in the library. They assert that patrons use such reference sources for their assignments and researches. Finally, they discovered that the major challenges affecting respondents' use of reference sources and services are that the materials are old and wasting of time when searching for reference materials.

Motiang, Wallis and Karodia (2014) evaluated the resources and services provision and ascertain the satisfaction derived by users' of the University of Southern Africa Library. The study focussed on the type of information resources and user satisfaction from the services benefited. Copies of questionnaire were administered on students, academic and administrative staff with 71% response rate. The study revealed significant use of library, its resources and services and were satisfied with library operating hours, registration process and staff members. Areas that need attention include: increase in book and journal collection, services from staff and internet services.

Akor and Alhassan (2015) evaluated the reference services of three university

libraries in Benue state (University of Agriculture Makurdi, Benue State University and University of Mker). The study used questionnaire to collect data. It was discovered that the services provided in the three university libraries were answering reference queries; provision of referral and digital reference services.

Ogbuiyi (2015) conducted a study to determine the availability and use of reference sources and services in Babcock University library using survey research design and simple random sampling method to select 93 users. Results showed that respondents consulted reference sources weekly and that the majority of the respondents indicated that the reference resources were highly available, accessible and adequate with exception of yearbook, bibliographies and biographies that were inadequate.

Apotiade, Oyewole and Belau (2015) investigated the availability, accessibility and utilization of electronic reference services by undergraduate students in Bells University, Ogun state, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey using multistage sampling technique to select 213 undergraduate students. The study revealed that the most available electronic reference service was e-mail and that erratic power supply was the major challenge.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A total of 25,942 registered library users of Abdullahi Fodiyo Library of Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto; Waziri Junaidu Library of Shehu Shagari College of Education; and Sokoto State Polytechnic were the target population of this study. They comprise the Postgraduate, Undergraduate, High National Diploma (HND), Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and National Certificate of Education (NCE) students from the three named institutions.

A sample size of 377 users was drawn from a population of 25,942 users in three academic libraries in Sokoto State. In order to arrive at the sample size of 377

users, Krejcie and Morgan of 1970 was used hence in a population of 20,000 and 30,000, a sample size of 377 and 379 is enough representation. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used to arrive at the sample size of 377 using Krejcie and Morgan table (1970).

This involves listing out the three institutions with the users of the academic libraries and then select the sample according to the population of each strata (institution library). The principle is that the higher the population, the higher the sample size in the stratum.

Table 1 Population of the Study

Academic Libraries	Library Users	Sample Size
Usman Danfodio University, Sokoto	*4,408	64
Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto	14,261	207
Sokoto State Polytechnic, Kirnin Kebbi	7,273	106
Total	25,942	377

*There are 4,408 users of UDU library. What accounted for this meagre number of users is in line with the policy of the university library. The policy is that apart from the normal registration on admission to the university, students are required to register with the university as registered users. All the other two academic libraries accept students as registered users provided they have undergone the normal institutions' registration (payment of school fees and other charges). Stratified random sampling technique was employed and a sample size of 377 undergraduates were used for the study.

Structured questionnaire with a four point Likert scale was designed,

administered on respondents, retrieved and used to answer the research questions raised. The four point Likert scale (Strongly Agree (SA); Agree (A); Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with 4, 3, 2, 1 rating scale was used to calculate the mean scores and standard deviation as well as frequency and percentage of individual item and items on the table. This determines the decision.

Analysis, Findings and Discussion

The data collected was analysed using frequencies, percentages and mean. In order to ease analyses, a criteria percentage and mean score of 50% and 2.50 respectively were used.

Table 2: Administration of research Instrument and Response rate

Respondents Group	Copies of Questionnaire Distributed	Copies of Filled Returned and Usable Questionnaire	Response Rate (%)
Usmanu Danfodiyo University Sokoto	64	55	85.9
Shehu Shagari College of Education	207	159	76.8
Sokoto State Polytechnic	106	90	84.9
Total	377	304	80.6

The level of reaction of the respondents to the research instrument as presented in Table 2 clearly indicated the distribution of 377 copies of questionnaire out of which 304 completed/returned copies were found usable. This makes the response rate to stand at 80.6%. It is obvious from Table 2 that 55 of the respondents were from Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, 159 from

Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto and 90 from Sokoto State Polytechnic. The empirical implication is that, the higher the number of questionnaire administered, the higher the response rate while few copies administered would result to low response rate ie all things being equal. With higher sample, there is likelihood that sample error would be reduced.

Table 3: Types of Reference Sources Available in Academic Libraries in Sokoto State

Reference Sources	Usmanu Danfodiyo University	Shehu Shagari College of Education	Sokoto State Polytechnic
Abstracts	A	A	A
Almanacs	A	A	A
Atlases	A	A	NA
Bibliographies	A	A	A
Biographies	A	A	A
Catalogues	A	A	A
Dictionaries	A	A	A
Directories	A	A	A
Encyclopedias	A	A	NA
Indexes	A	NA	NA
Maps	A	A	A
Manuals	A	A	A
Yearbooks	A	A	A

A = Available NA = Not Available

It was observed that the responses as illustrated in Table 3 that the available reference sources in Usmanu Danfodiyo University Library were abstracts, almanacs, atlases, bibliographies, biographies, catalogues, dictionaries, encyclopedias, indexes, maps, manuals and yearbooks. Shehu Shagari College of Education has similar reference resources in their library but with exception of indexes. Similarly, Sokoto State Polytechnic Library has same set of reference sources but without bibliographies and indexes.

The major findings of this study show that the common available reference materials in the three selected academic

libraries in Sokoto State were: abstracts, almanacs, atlases, biographies, catalogues, dictionaries, encyclopedias, maps, manuals and yearbooks; while the common available reference services offered are current awareness service, library instruction and ready reference. It is not surprising as these are the most common/available reference services and services in most academic libraries running/providing manual services in Nigeria. This finding agreed with that of Ogbuyi (2015) who discovered in a study that the reference sources were highly available, accessible and adequate except yearbook, bibliographies and biographies that were inadequate.

Table 4: Types of Reference Services Available in Academic Libraries in Sokoto State

Reference Services	Usmanu Danfodiyo University	Shehu Shagari College of Education	Sokoto State Polytechnic
Inter-library loan	NA	NA	NA
Current Awareness Service	A	A	A
Readers' Advisory	NA	A	A
Library Instruction	A	A	A
Ready Reference	A	A	A
Selective Dissemination of Information	A	A	NA
Bibliography Compilation	NA	NA	NA
Indexing and Abstracting	NA	NA	NA

A = Available NA = Not Available

The responses from Table 4 indicated that Usmanu Danfodiyo University Library, Sokoto offered current awareness services, library instruction, ready reference and selective dissemination of

information. Shehu Shagari College of Education Library provides all of the above mentioned services in addition to readers' advisory services. On the other hand Sokoto State Polytechnic Library

offered current awareness services, readers' advisory services and library instruction. The three academic libraries could not provide bibliographic compilation as well as indexing and abstracting. This is because of the technicalities involved in their preparation.

This finding is not in agreement with findings of Apotiodé, Oyewole and Belau (2015) as well as Akor and Alhassan

(2015) respectively. The former researchers discovered that the most available electronic reference service in Bells University library, Ogun state was the e-mail. The latter researchers discovered that the reference services provided in the three University libraries in Benue state were: answering reference queries, provision referral and digital reference services.

Table 5: Reasons for Patrons Usage of Reference Sources

Reasons	Responses							
	SA		A		D		SD	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Preparing for examination	138	45	88	29	17	6	61	20
Preparing Project/Thesis	132	43	115	38	9	3	48	16
Reading for Pleasure	139	46	99	33	14	5	52	17
Preparing Notes	92	30	128	42	24	8	60	20
Preparing Assignment	135	44	121	40	5	2	43	14

SA = Strongly Agree A = Agree D = Disagree SD = Strongly Disagree

From Table 5 majority of the respondents 139 (46%) and 138 (45%) strongly agreed that they use reference sources and services to read for pleasure and prepare for examination, while 132 (43%) respondents use the reference sources and services for the preparation of project/thesis, 139 (46%) uses the sources for general reading and 92 (30%) for preparation of notes and 135 (44%) for assignments. The implication of this result on the subject matter is that the reference sources were adequate and hence met users' information needs. This was noticed as users were able to use the reference sources to prepare for

examination, project write-up, reading for pleasure and assignment.

The study revealed that the major reasons for the use of reference sources and services by the library patrons; were reading for pleasure and preparing for examination. This signifies that students have formed reading habit thus the National Library of Nigeria on annual basis sponsor reading promotion campaign. This finding is contrary to the findings of Ogunniyi, Efosa and Sheji (2013) who in their study revealed that the respondents make use of the reference sources and services more for research as indicated by 212 (52%) respondents and 206 (51%) for assignment respectively.

Table 6: Level of Users' Satisfaction with reference sources and services Provided

	Responses							Decision
	HS	S	NS	HNS	N	Fx	Mean	
Inter-library loan	25	89	142	48	304	699	2.30	R
Current Awareness Service	74	134	32	64	304	826	2.72	A
Readers' Advisory	81	107	50	66	304	811	2.67	A
Library Instruction	108	94	46	56	304	862	2.84	A
Ready Reference Service	95	118	34	57	304	859	2.83	A
Selective Dissemination of Information	117	103	19	65	304	880	2.89	A
Bibliographic Compilation	22	45	133	104	304	593	1.95	R
Indexing and Abstracting	98	28	105	73	304	759	2.50	R

HS = Highly Satisfied S = Satisfied NS = Not Satisfied HNS = Highly Not Satisfied N = Number of Responses Fx = Summation A = Accepted R = Rejected

It is clear from Table 6 that averagely, the respondents were satisfied with

current awareness services, readers' advisory, library instruction and selective

dissemination of information because the mean score value recorded for these variables was greater than 2.51 while they indicated that they were not satisfied with inter-library loan, bibliographic compilation and indexing and abstracting services whose mean value was far below the 2.51 pass mark. The implication of this result was that despite the fact that the respondents were averagely satisfied with the reference sources and services offered, their provisions were haphazard. There is likelihood that disparity can exist in the information acquisition among users in the three academic libraries.

The study revealed that respondents were not satisfied with inter-library loan, bibliographic compilation and indexing and abstracting but were satisfied with current awareness service, readers' advisory services, library instruction, ready reference and selective dissemination of information. This is in consonance with the findings of this study which revealed that those academic libraries do not offer inter-library loan, bibliographic compilation and indexing and abstracting services as such the responses indicate low level of satisfaction. This also leads to the revelation that current awareness services, readers' advisory service, library instruction, ready reference and selective dissemination of information were adequate to them while inter-library loan, bibliographic compilation and indexing and abstracting were inadequate. This finding confirm that of Motiang, Wallis and Karodia (2014) who discovered that though students make significant use of library collection and services but areas such as increase in book and journal collection, services from staff and Internet facilities need improvement.

Conclusion

Based on the above findings of the research, it could be concluded that the availability of quality reference sources together with the reasons that pushed the

users to the library are the basis of users' satisfaction, as the users are driven by their information needs which form the backbone of their reasons for visiting the library in the first place. If such users find current and relevant reference sources at their disposal then, their level of use and satisfaction with the reference services will increase significantly. This in turn will lead to increased effective utilisation of the library and its resources as a whole. As a result, the productivity of the library users in terms of research output, quality of work and timely completion of assignments will be recorded.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. The management of academic libraries in Sokoto State should make additional indexes and bibliographies to existing reference collection. In addition, they should also include other reference services such as inter-library loan, indexing and abstracting and electronic/virtual reference services to their services.
2. The management of the three institutions in conjunction with the academic libraries should provide more reference materials such as past examination question papers, project/theses and other general reference resources to the users as they mostly use the reference section for preparation of examination, project/thesis, general reading and assignment.
3. The academic libraries in Sokoto state should emphasise on collaboration and library cooperation; this will not only facilitate resource sharing and inter-library loan but will also help in the transfer of expertise like abstracting and indexing skills from one library to another.

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