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PERCEPTION OF FRESH UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS TO LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

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Abstract

This survey examined the perception of users to library and information services in academic libraries. A structured questionnaire was developed and validated to elicit information from 300 sample population selected to reflect the entirety of the case study. Four hypotheses were developed and tested using chi square statistical methods at 0.05 significance level. The findings showed that inadequate communication between the library and its users as well as inability of the academic libraries to acquire relevant infrastructures and update their libraries with current information were all factors responsible for the ways users perceive the services offered by the academic libraries. Based on the findings recommendations were made that academic libraries should have full internet connectivity to enhance effective communication between the library and its users as well as organize regular orientation sessions for all categories of library users in order to update their knowledge with new services available in the library as well as information technology applications and usage relating to library services.

Key Words: Perception, Students, Information, Services, Academic, Libraries, University,

Introduction

The services offered in libraries include: acquisition, catalog/database, circulation, reference, document delivery, bindery, and operational services (e.g., audiovisual viewing, photocopying, etc.). These are enormous services aimed at satisfying the needs of the clientele (Dewey, 1983). However, most library users are not making the best use of the available facilities, most especially, the undergraduate students. The quality of higher education is influenced by a number of factors including knowledge and use of library. This in turn is greatly enhanced by the way library users perceive the services rendered by libraries. However, undergraduate students in the universities tend to be oblivious of numerous services available to them in academic libraries.

In any institution of learning, there are facilities other than classrooms that can contribute in no small measure to the teaching and learning process. In order to have effective learning, learners must have access to necessary materials, information and resources. They have to interact with tangible and intangible resources and institutions to ensure some level of performance (Obanewa, 2002). In the modem world, a wide range of information is disseminated through the printed word, yet it is impossible to have access to all forms of information and knowledge through wide reading alone. Other facilities and agencies thus exist that emphasize audio-visual learning. They include electronic media such as radio, television, cable satellite, the Internet. These media give wide publicity to events, objects, discoveries, scientific findings, new products, and new services.

Statement of the Problem

Libraries make significant investments in acquiring materials as well as in technology in order to automate their libraries and deliver information resources and services through their Web sites. The integrated library system (ILS) for most libraries represents the most critical component of its technology infrastructure and can do the most to help or hinder a library in fulfilling its mission to serve its patrons and in operating efficiently. However, as libraries consider the best strategies to satisfy their users through improved service delivery, such as moving to a new ILS, it's helpful to have as much data as possible to make an informed decision. One aspect of that data might involve some measure of the perceptions of library users which are the beneficiaries of those services. In order to produce data that portrays some of the general perceptions that fresh undergraduate students have about services rendered by the library, this study intends to examine those factors which informed such perception with a view to suggesting ways of ensuring maximum use of library services.

Literature Review

Perception according to psychologists can be defined as the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce a meaningful experience of the world (Wikipedia, 2010). Sensation usually refers to the immediate, relatively unprocessed result of stimulation of sensory receptors in the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, or skin. Perception, on the other hand, better describes one's ultimate experience of the world and typically involves further processing of sensory input. In practice, sensation and perception are virtually impossible to separate, because they are part of one continuous process.

Perception has been shown to be informed by a specific understanding of the relationship between perception and behaviour. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) in their theory of reasoned action (TRA) posited that an individual's behaviour is determined by his/her intention to perform that both behaviour and intention are influenced jointly by the individual's attitude and subjective norm – a measure of how people are influenced by their peer's opinions. Based on this reasoning, attitudes play important part in affecting behaviour which in turn affects perception.

Our sense organs translate physical energy from the environment into electrical impulses processed by the brain. For example, light, in the form of electro-magnetic radiation, causes receptor cells in our eyes to activate and send signals to the brain. But we do not understand these signals as pure energy. The process of perception allows us to interpret them as objects, events, people, and situations.

Without the ability to organize and interpret sensations, life would seem like a meaningless jumble of colors, shapes, and sounds. A person without any perceptual ability would not be able to recognize faces, understand language, or avoid threats. Such a person would not survive for long. In fact, many species of animals have evolved exquisite sensory and perceptual systems

that aid their survival. In the words of Dewey (1983), libraries are schools and the librarian in the highest sense a teacher." Oyedeji (1980) describes a library as having machinery" for the use of the collection.

Library and Library Services

McShane, (2004) opined that libraries developed as a result of the need to preserve valuable records of events. These records might be in the form of written scrolls, papyrus kept in jars, written clay tablets, manuscripts kept in monasteries, and printed materials such books, letters, statutes, and laws. Only a few people, such as kings, nobles, renowned scholars, and ecclesiastical orders had access to these libraries. Modern libraries have taken on additional new roles because of changing demands and new technology.

Oliver (2000) mentions new technologies as powerful tools in providing learning environments where teachers and learners are partners, and where learners have a wide variety of choice in the nature and form of their learning. The question here is that if students are provided an online learning environment how can these technologies be effectively utilized by them. Simply making resources available does not necessarily imply that all students would be motivated to use them (Van Weert & Pilot 2003).

Libraries are currently regarded as agents for educational, social, economic, and political change, and their doors are open to all. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO 1976) views the library as "an organised collection of published books and periodicals and of other reading and audio-visual materials and the services of staff that are able to provide and interpret such materials as are required to meet the information, research, educational or recreational needs of users." The UNESCO definition touches on every aspect of what a library in the modern sense stands for.

Nigerian libraries, documentation and information centers are yet to fully adopt modern information technology for information handling. Studies have examined the advantages of the use and application of computers to organizational work (Brown, 1975; Akinyotu, 1977; Edoka, 1983). The benefits of computers for library operations cannot be overemphasized. Their value includes speed, storage capacity, links resources, and accuracy of record management. Computer literacy has become part of many public curricula however, not all people receive their computer training in public schools. In recent years there has been increasing emphasis on adult computer training, often through community education programs or in-service training (Rogers, 2005). Other adults receive their initial computer experience as part of their post-secondary education, which in most cases is mandatory. This includes undergraduates in Nigerian Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, and universities. Various studies have reported that students initially undergo difficulties towards self-directed learning and they need teacher support (Ryan, 1993). Knowles (1980) indicated that students entering educational programmes without learned skills experienced anxiety, frustration and often failure whereas new pedagogical skills and fluency in technology is required by tutors. Research also proves that tutors have turned more vigilant and proficient in their work.

Information Services in Academic Libraries

Academic library is any library established in the institution of higher learning to cater for the learning, teaching, research and academic needs of students, teachers and researchers in an academic environment. (Eguavoen and Ola 1999) Examples of academic libraries include college, polytechnic and university libraries. Academic libraries. support all academic programmes offered in the institution.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- evaluate the use of library services by fresh undergraduate students of the university of Ibadan,
- examine the perception of fresh undergraduate students of the university of Ibadan on library services,
- identify reasons for students' perception on library services
- To suggest measures to improve students' perception on the services available in the libraries

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the purpose of this research

- There will be no significant difference between sex and user's perception of library and information services in academic libraries.
- There will be no significant difference in users' perception of staff efficiency and user's information needs in academic libraries.
- There will be no significant difference in the frequency of usage of library and users' perception of library services in academic libraries.
- There will be no significant difference in the mode of access to the library facilities and users' perception of information services provided in academic libraries.

Methodology

The prime concern of this study is to examine fresh students' perception, motivations and engagement with services provided by the library. To explore this, survey method was employed. A structured questionnaire was designed and administered to fresh under graduate students of the University of Ibadan to elicit information on their perceptions in library and information services. The case study was carried out in the beginning of 2009/2010 session. A sample of 300 fresh students studying in various departments and faculties in the university was taken and data collection was done through. 266 responses (88.7%) were received and are presented in table A.

Sampling Technique

The sample consists of 300 respondents stratified into nine groups according to the faculty of studies comprising fresh undergraduate students. 266 Questionnaires were returned, of which 250 were selected to satisfy the stratification for research purposes. The sample size of three hundred students were randomly selected from the total population of three thousand fresh students cutting across all the academic faculties in the university.

Research Instruments

The research instrument titled "Users' Perception of Library Services Scale (UPLSSS)" uses a three-point Likert Scale, and was administered to evaluate users' views of the services available in the libraries for research purposes.

Validation of the Instrument

The face-validity and content-validity of the instrument were verified by experts in the subject area. The various suggestions made were used to modify the instrument.

Table A: Distribution of Student Sample, and Return Rates of the Questionnaire

Faculty/College	Number Distributed	Return rate
Law	22	100%
Science	28	89.3%
Arts	24	100%
Technology	26	92.3%
Education	24	75.0%
Agricultural Science	72	97.2%
Medicine	60	75.0%
Social Sciences	23	87%
Veterinary Medicine	21	86%

Method of Data Analysis

The data were collated and analyzed using chi square statistical method. The above hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance and the findings are presented in tables 1 – 4 below.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Distribution by Sex

Table 1 presents the respondents' responses to library services by both male and female respondents.

Table 1: Distribution by Sex

	Serials	Circulation	Reference	Online services	Computed $\chi 2$	Expected Value	dF
Male	32	68	66	100	2.44	9.70	3
Female	33	66	72	105			
Total	65	134	138	205			

Hypothesis 1

The computed outcome of the first hypothesis was confirmed as the findings was not statistically significant in the views held by respondents of different sexes. Their perception of library services showed that the computed $\chi 2$ values was 2.44 while the expected value was 9.70 under the degree of freedom of 3 (P<0.05). It can be seen from table 2 above that online services provided by the library is the mostly consulted services by both male and female respondents alike.

Purpose of Using Library Services

The respondents were asked to indicate reasons for which they use any of the library services. The result is shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: Purpose for which Services are sought

Library services	Responses				Computed $\chi 2$	Expected Value	dF
	General Purpose	Examinations purpose	Reading for Leisure	Research purpose			
Serials services	54	70	56	86	52.086	49.368	9
Reference services	64	67	56	79			
Circulation services	65	98	67	36			
Online information services	51	50	89	76			
Total	234	275	268	277			

Hypothesis 2

The result of this hypothesis showed that the null hypothesis was rejected with the computed value of $\chi 2$ being 52.086 while the expected value is 49.368 at the degree of freedom of 9 (P>0.05). The hypothesis is thus rejected. This means that there is a significant difference in users' perception of staff efficiency and user's information needs in academic libraries.

Frequency of Visit

Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of their visits to the library for any of the library services. The outcome of their responses are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Frequency of Use of Services

	Very often	Often	Not often	Computed χ^2	Expected Value	dF
Serials	41	78	147	131.862	129.233	6
Reference	105	72	99			
Circulation	98	76	92			
Online services	148	85	33			

Hypothesis 3

The results of this hypothesis showed that the null hypothesis was not supported and therefore rejected. Here the views held by the respondents on their frequency of usage of library on their perception of library services in academic libraries showed reasonable statistical significance as evident in the computed χ^2 value of 131.862 with the expected value of 129.233 at the degree of freedom of 6 (P<0.05). Hence there is a significant relationship between the frequency of usage of library and the user's perception of services provided in the academic libraries.

Access to Services

The respondents were asked to indicate the requirement for having access to any of the services as well as the mode of their accessibility to library services. The results are shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Requirement for Access to Library Services

	Registration	Fee payment	Special permission	Computed χ^2	Expected value	dF
Serials	119	0	147	114.994	116.088	6
Reference	126	0	130			
Circulation	244	0	22			
Online services	0	258	8			

Hypothesis 4

In testing the last null hypothesis, the results showed that there is no statistical significance in the views held by the respondents on the mode of access to the library and their perceptions of library services in academic libraries. The outcome shows that computed value of χ^2 is 114.994 while the expected value is 116.088 at the degree of freedom of 6(P<0.05).

Discussion of Findings

The analysis of the data collected revealed that there is no perceived significant difference in both male and female's perception of the services available in academic libraries. The result further showed that mode of access to the services in academic library as well as frequency of use have no statistical significance on user's perception of services in academic libraries. However, there is significant difference in users' perception of mode of access to needed research materials as well as availability of current and up to date materials. In the University of Ibadan library, users are left to find their way through library resources usage. This usually poses a great challenge to library users because they always face difficulties locating materials on their own. This is closely related to the ease of use of library facilities

for research purposes and the way users perceive library services. This is not the case in academic libraries where silence is an ethic.

Since online facilities have a pool of resources, it is not surprising that the analysis shows that most users agree that current materials and resources for research are most common on the Internet.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

- Academic libraries should have full internet connectivity to enhance effective communication between the library and its users.
- Provision should be made for regular orientation programmes for all categories of library users in order to update their knowledge with new services available in the library as well as information technology applications and usage relating to library services.
- Computers should be made available at reduced costs so that researchers can have the privilege of accessing the Internet in the comfort of their homes. This will enable them to know current information about new library services especially the e-library.
- Our electric power providers and communication networks will have to improve their services, since they remain the backbone for effective use of information technology applications which will enhance library - user interaction.
- There is the need to provide up-to-date materials in academic libraries in order to encourage researchers to use their facilities.

Conclusion

This study has dealt extensively with the vacuum created by information gap between academic libraries in Nigeria and their users. Most services available in academic libraries do not enjoy full usage due to wrong perception of such services on the part of the users. Academic libraries in Nigeria need to rise up to this challenge by creating effective interactive medium between the services and the users. Library users should always be kept abreast of any new development in the library system as the main target of any library service is the user. The communication gap between the library and its users should be non existent if the services in academic libraries are to be maximized by the users. The universities need to explore the possibilities of bringing more infrastructure and technological resources. The access to the learning technology should be such that the students feel confident in availing the technological facilities to update their knowledge and advancement.

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