



**JOURNAL OF LIBRARY, EDUCATIONAL
MEDIA AND INFORMATION STUDIES
(JOLEMIS)**

VOL. 2, 2010

ISSN 2141 - 677X

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PATTERNS OF JOURNAL USE BY UNDERGRADUATES IN UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, NIGERIA.

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Abstract

Journal use by undergraduates in University of Ibadan was investigated to determine the purpose, frequency of use and challenges militating against its use. Undergraduates from Education, Science, Social Sciences and Technology were randomly selected to give a sample size of 154 and a questionnaire was used for data collection. Undergraduates in Technology were the highest users of journal for class work (50.0%) and research work (42.2%), while 83.3% of those in Science used CDROM as access point to journals. Weekly use of journals was found to be highest for those in Technology. Undergraduates in all the disciplines attributed power supply as a major factor affecting journal use, while those in the Social Sciences agreed that inadequate ICT skills (36.0%), inadequate ICT (35.0%) and difficulty locating journals (27.8%) were the major factors that affected their use of journals. Improved use of journals would be achieved when these challenges are eradicated.

Key words: Journal use, Undergraduates, Discipline, Nigeria.

Introduction

Undergraduates require knowledge and skill to become graduates and successful members of the society. Their programme in the university involves receiving lectures, undertaking assignments, term papers, seminar presentation, examination and writing a project report to earn a degree. Resources required to achieve their academic goals include textbooks, journals (print and electronic source), Internet sources, newspapers, bulletins, reference materials and monographs. However, the decision to use a particular format of resource is dependent on the requirements imposed by their class work and instructions from the lecturers (Tenopir, 2003).

Journals contain current information on various researches carried out in different disciplines and would be a veritable source of information to undergraduates. Zainab & Huzaimah (2007) collaborated this by reporting that journals contain relevant information on various topics, while Tenopir and King (2002) asserted that they are important information resources required for teaching and learning.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) opined that information resources may be available in the library and even identified as relevant to one's subject of interest, but the user may not be able to access them. Iyoro (2004) in a study carried out on library and information students in University of Ibadan, Nigeria reported that journals played

a significant role in the acquisition of knowledge due to ease of access. In a study carried out on the use of library by students at Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, Nigeria, it was revealed that accessibility to library resources was a major problem (Oyediran, 2004).

Anderson et. al (2001) considered journals as constituting a major part of all academic libraries collection and typically account for more than half of their expenditure on library materials as they are the most important and useful elements of its stock. Therefore, academic libraries commit a great percentage of funds to its acquisition for the provision of relevant information to its users.

Tenopir et al (2001) reported that traditional value-added service, such as peer review, indexing and abstracting help readers to find the most valuable journal to use to sustain research work. Journals are said to be the nerve-centre of any academic library and they constitute the life support of any academic pursuit. Markel (2008) opined that journals assist students in learning as they can reflect deeply on their thoughts and feelings on issues and events which are an essential part of the learning process to promote students' academic activities. Journals are also important to undergraduates primarily for research to achieve academic excellence (Ajala, 2008).

Easy availability of full-texts of articles is one overriding factor that undergraduates take into account when selecting resources for research (King & Tenopir, 1999). Journals could come in the print or electronic format. Electronic journals (E-journals) can be accessed and used from anywhere in the world at any given time, by a number of people. The use of journals among undergraduates varies among disciplines and there is an apparent overall increase in the proportion of electronic as opposed to print journals used (Tenopir & King, 2002; De Groote, S. L. & Dorsch, 2001). Marcum and George (2003) reported that academics and students are comfortable with using both print and electronic resources. Crawford et al (2004) found that the freely available Internet is the most highly used source for students locating resources.

Rogers (2001) in a study carried out in some departmental libraries in Ohio State University in USA, found that biological and medical science faculty and students were the greatest users of scholarly journals in both print and electronic forms. He also observed that over half of the faculty and undergraduates used electronic journals and that acceptance was growing. Grajek (2000) found that more than three quarters (77%) of all library users at the University medical centre in Sierra Leone used their computer to access electronic journals.

De Groote and Dorsch (2003) found that medical and nursing students in University of Illinois at Chicago used online journals more than print journals. This was corroborated by Kerin et al (2004) in their study on use of information sources by engineering and law undergraduates revealed that online databases containing journals were very useful reference point for them.

The use of journals by undergraduates could be affected by different factors, such as: irregular power supply, unavailability of required journals, lack of access and language. Others include lack of location of journals on the shelf and language barrier, inadequate financial capability of users and libraries (Ehikhamenor, 2003; Kerin et al., 2004; Ezeani, 2005 & Adetimirin, 2008).

In a study on undergraduates' use of ICT in Nigeria by Adetimirin (2008), it was revealed that financial constraint impeded the availability and use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and electronic resources by academic libraries and users. Inadequacy of finance has some consequences on subscriptions which become difficult because of foreign exchange transactions, thereby making acquisition almost impossible. This is peculiar to libraries in developing countries which use overseas agents for subscription to journals which are acquired mostly from developed countries.

Statement of the Problem

Journals have been found to be an important asset to undergraduates as they contain current research findings which will improve their academic performance. Academic libraries in Nigeria have been finding it difficult in providing these journals due to their paucity of funds and when they are provided, it has been observed that some undergraduates are not aware of the existence of some of the journals in the library. Studies have been carried out in developed countries which revealed that journal use by undergraduates may be influenced by discipline. This study therefore, sought to investigate the purpose of use of journals, frequency of use and factors affecting the use of journals by undergraduates in some disciplines in the University of Ibadan.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. examine the journal collection in the selected faculty libraries;
2. investigate the purpose of journal use by undergraduates in the selected disciplines;
3. find out the frequency of journal use by undergraduates in the selected disciplines;
4. investigate the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities available for the accessibility and use of journals by undergraduates; and
5. examine the challenges faced by the undergraduates in the use of journals;

Methodology

The survey design was employed for this study and the population comprised all 11,765 undergraduates from all the thirteen faculties in the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The multi stage random sampling technique was used to select four disciplines: The Social Sciences, Science, Education and Technology and the study population for the study was 773 (Table 1). One department per discipline was randomly selected, while respondents from all the levels (100-500) were randomly selected using a sampling fraction of 20%. Questionnaire was the data collection instrument employed for this study and data was analysed using the Statistical Program for Social Science software (SPSS).

Table 1. Distribution of Undergraduates according to Faculties and Departments

Faculty	Department	Study Population	Sample size
Education	Library Studies	185	37
Science	Zoology	160	32
Social Science	Sociology	297	59
Technology	Petroleum Engineering	131	26
Total		773	154

Results and Discussion**Journal Collection in the Faculty Libraries**

Print and electronic journals were available in all the selected disciplines in the libraries. The undergraduates were found to use more of a combination of the print and electronic journals than using either the print or electronic journal. Those in Faculty of the Social Sciences were found to be the highest users of the combination of print and electronic journals (29.2%), while those in Science were the least users of a combination of print and electronic journals (21.3%) as observed in Table 2. Undergraduates in the Social Sciences used more of print (45.5%) and electronic (29.2%) journals than those in other disciplines and this could be attributed to the fact that their faculty library is well stocked with current print resources and also subscribe to some electronic resources (Table 2).

Table 2. Format of Journal used by Undergraduates in different disciplines

Journal Type	Education		Science		Social Sc.		Technology		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Print	12	27.3	8	18.2	20	45.5	4	9.1	44
Electronic	3	14.3	5	23.8	13	61.9	-	-	21
Print & Electronic	22	24.7	19	21.3	26	29.2	22	24.7	89
Total									154

Purpose of Journal Use by the Undergraduates

Undergraduates used journals for different purposes such as class work, project report and to know about the latest development in their field. Those in the Social Sciences were the highest users of journals for class work, project report and new development in their field (50.0%, 42.2% and 58.3%) respectively, followed by those in Science for class work and research project (Table 3).

Table 3. Purpose of Journal Use by Undergraduates according to disciplines

Purpose of Journal Use	Education		Science		Social Sc.		Technology		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Class work	7	20.5	8	23.5	17	50.0	2	5.9	34
Research project	7	15.6	11	24.4	19	42.2	8	17.8	45
New Development in the field	6	25.0	1	4.2	14	58.3	3	12.5	24
Total									103

Frequency of Journal Use by Undergraduates

Undergraduates in all the disciplines were found not to use journals on a daily basis and this may be due to their work load as they have to attend lectures daily and would not be given assignments or term papers on a daily basis. When grouped weekly (a combination of twice and once a week), undergraduates in Technology were found to use journals more frequently (19) than those in other disciplines (Table 4). Undergraduates in the Social Sciences used journals least as they were the highest occasional users (30.6%), while two undergraduates in Education had never used journals before.

Table 4. Frequency of use of Journal by undergraduates in the selected disciplines

Frequency	Education		Science		Social Sc.		Technology		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Daily	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Twice a week	3	13.6	8	36.4	4	18.2	7	31.8	22
Once a week	5	21.7	7	30.4	9	39.1	12	52.2	23
Once a month	10	15.6	21	32.8	15	23.4	18	28.1	64
Occasionally	7	19.4	9	25.0	11	30.6	9	25.0	36
Never	2	0.4	1	0.2	1	0.2	1	0.2	5
Total									150

ICT Facilities Used by Undergraduates for Accessing Journals

Different ICTs were employed to access journals by the undergraduates such as computer, computer with Internet facilities and CDROM. The undergraduates used the different ICTs in varying ways. Some were found to use a combination of ICT to access journals such as Computer with Internet facilities and CDROM (Table 5). Undergraduates in Science were found to be the highest users of CDROM as access point to journals and this could be attributed to the fact that there were more electronic resources for the discipline in CDROM than other disciplines. Those in

the Social Sciences were the highest users of different ICT facilities to access journals (Table 5).

Table 5. Type of ICT used to access Journals by Undergraduates

ICT	Education		Science		Social Sc.		Technology		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Computer	7	29.2	8	33.3	8	33.3	1	4.2	24
Internet	15	20.5	20	27.4	30	41.1	8	11.0	73
CDROM	1	16.7	5	83.3	-	-	-	-	6
Computer + Internet	10	30.3	-	-	15	45.5	8	24.2	33
Computer + Internet + CDROM	2	22.2	3	33.3	2	22.2	2	22.2	9
Total									145

Challenges to the use of Journals by Undergraduates

The challenges faced by the undergraduates in their use of journals across the disciplines were many. Some were classified as major and these were challenges that more than 20% of the undergraduates agreed to them being inhibitors to their use of journals. They included inadequate ICT, irregular power supply, attitude of staff, frequent computer breakdown, inadequate ICT skills and difficulty in locating journals (Table 6).

Table 6: Challenges of Journal use by Undergraduates in different disciplines

Challenges	Education				Science				Social Science				Technology				Total
	Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		Agree		Disagree		
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Inadequate access	21	15.4	10	7.4	24	17.6	5	3.7	23	16.9	30	22.1	8	5.9	15	11.0	136
Inadequate ICT	25	18.2	5	3.6	22	16.1	6	4.4	48	35.0	9	6.6	18	13.1	4	2.9	137
Inadequate journals	20	15.2	12	9.1	15	11.4	11	8.3	26	19.7	23	17.4	15	11.4	10	7.6	132
Irregular power Supply	25	18.0	7	5.0	27	19.4	2	1.4	45	32.4	8	5.8	22	15.8	3	2.2	139
Opening hours of Library	17	14.5	11	9.4	11	9.4	16	13.7	25	21.4	18	15.4	9	7.7	10	8.5	117
Attitude of staff	17	15.0	8	7.8	11	9.7	10	8.8	28	24.8	18	15.9	14	12.4	7	6.2	113
Language barrier	14	11.9	14	11.9	9	7.6	14	11.9	20	16.9	23	19.5	5	4.2	19	16.1	118
Frequent computer Breakdown	12	10.8	9	8.1	12	10.8	11	9.9	30	27.0	18	16.2	9	8.1	10	9.0	111
Inadequate ICT skills	25	18.2	5	3.6	22	16.1	6	4.4	48	35.0	9	6.6	18	13.1	4	2.9	137
Locating journals	19	15.1	9	7.1	24	19.0	4	3.2	35	27.8	16	12.7	10	7.9	9	7.1	126

Findings revealed that undergraduates in the Social Sciences were the only ones that agreed that inadequate ICT skills (36.0%), inadequate ICT (35.0%), difficulty locating journals (27.8%) and frequent computer breakdown (27.0%), and were factors that affected their use of journals. However, irregular power supply was considered to be a major challenge in all the disciplines except by undergraduates in Technology (Table 6). This was expected because power supply is a major challenge in Nigeria as power supply is very erratic and irregular in the country and many organizations depend on alternative sources of power like generators, solar energy and others.

Discussion

The undergraduates used both print and electronic journals for class work, project report and research project, although their use across the disciplines varied. This finding is supported by Tenopir and King (2000) who reported that journals were important information resources required for teaching and learning. Undergraduates in all the faculties did not use journals on a daily basis but were found to be using it regularly, although undergraduates in Technology were found to use journals more frequently than those in other disciplines. This finding is not in agreement with that of Rogers (2001) who reported that biological and medical students were the greatest users of journals in Ohio State University, USA. Undergraduates in the Social Sciences were found to be occasional users of journals, while a few undergraduates in Education had never used journals before. This may be attributed to problems such as lack of access to journal and irregular power supply (Ehikhamenor, 2003, Ezeani, 2005 & Adetimirin, 2008).

The major challenges to the use of journals by the undergraduates were: inadequate ICT, irregular power supply, attitude of staff, frequent computer breakdown, inadequate ICT skills and difficulty in locating journals. This is in agreement with Kerins et. al (2004) in a study on the use of the Internet by Engineering and law students in Ireland who found that access, inadequate skills could be problems militating against the use of the Internet.

However, only undergraduates in the Social Sciences agreed that inadequate ICT skills, inadequate ICT, difficulty locating journals and frequent computer breakdown were factors that affected their use of journals. This is corroborated by Ehikhamenor, 2003; Ezeani, 2005 and Adetimirin (2008) who reported that infrastructure was a major factor to the use of ICT in Nigeria.

Conclusion

Journals are of high relevance to undergraduates in their pursuit of academic success in the university as they provide relevant information in their various disciplines. The study has shown that undergraduates used print and electronic journals for class work and project reports. Their journal use was however, affected by the discipline they belonged to and some challenges facing them. These challenges were power supply, inadequate ICT, irregular power supply and attitude of staff. Others included frequent computer breakdown, inadequate ICT skills and difficulty in locating journals. Undergraduates in the Faculty of Technology used ICTs more frequently than those in other faculties. These challenges must be addressed by the university administrators for increased use of journals by undergraduates for improved academic performance.

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