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INFORMATION SOURCING IN AN AUTOMATED NIGERIAN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

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ABSTRACT

Information seeking is a fundamental human process closely related to learning and problem solving, thus the information sourcing characteristics of users of the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan is examined with a view to evaluating their use of modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities provided. Use patterns, user satisfaction with the ICT facilities, and user preference of manual and electronic facilities provided are evaluated. Descriptive survey research to appraise the adequacy of modern ICT in the library was carried out. Questionnaire, interview and participatory observation methods were used. The results show that majority of the users (75%) prefer the new ICT facilities to the manual, even though they encounter difficulties in use. Lack of constant power supply, limited access to online resources, lack of adequate user and staff training and non-creation of awareness for the ICT facilities is identified as some of the problems. Recommendations are made for future improvement and continuous evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

Information sourcing or information seeking is a vital part of man's behaviour. It is a fundamental human process closely related to learning and problem solving. These problems can only be solved when human beings have access to adequate, timely and accurate information. Researches have been carried out to find out how better to provide information or deliver information services to different categories of users. (Marchionin, 1995; Olorunda and Oyelude, 2003). Birader, Rajashekar and Kumar (2008) studied the searching behaviour of students and faculty in use of search engines on the internet and found that all students and most faculty in Kuvempu University, Shimoga use search engines such as Yahoo and Google for their information retrieval and seek help from friends as well as used help messages from the search engines they use. The Internet has become an important component of the electronic services in the Academic Institution and has permeated all aspects of life and thus broken down barriers of communication and information access worldwide. The ability of a user to interact with various library resources, while searching or utilizing information, enables him to realize the importance of the library in satisfying his information needs. According to Fabunmi (2004), users are seeking an information service that is timely in its delivery, such as responding to requests for information or help desk enquiries; meets their needs; is easy to understand and use; and that is delivered by courteous and knowledgeable staff. Since the job of information provision is a challenging one, more so for information specialists, and librarians who have to stay constantly abreast of new publications, new formats of information and new technologies have to be used to ensure easy access and retrieval by their clients. In actual fact, as Dahl, Banerjee and Spalti (2006) categorically state, libraries that cling to traditional service models in an era of ICT, rising costs and flat budget cannot thrive. Modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in libraries creates a new forum for global access thus there is the need to look at ICT with respect to clientele usage in libraries.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The history of automation in the Kenneth Dike Library has been told (Mosuro, 2000, Adeyemi, 2002, Fatoki, 2004). These studies have documented the various stages of progress in the use of modern ICT in the library but none have examined information sourcing and the use of modern ICT, hence this study. In the year 2005, the e-classroom and the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) called KDLINK were launched in the library. Before this, CD-ROM search and limited use of Internet facilities were provided. A multi-media laboratory which allows eighty participants at a time to use internet facilities for a fee, and also hold library orientation training as well as lectures, seminars and workshops that are web-based was put into use in the year 2007. The Online Public Access Catalogue is at the time of this research, under review for updating of the database, and migration to using new software. With the expansion of the facilities, it has become necessary to evaluate and find out what impact the added services are having on the users. This is

Information Sourcing in an Automated Nigerian Academic Library

the first of such effort. Periodic evaluation will be carried out in future as well because any service is best evaluated to ensure more improvement.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are

- (a) To examine the various information and communication technologies in the Kenneth Dike Library with respect to how users seek for information from them.
- (b) To evaluate the level of satisfaction of users with the libraries electronic and non-electronic resources in the library.
- (c) To determine the priorities of the library users in information sourcing.

METHODOLOGY

A survey method was adopted using questionnaire and observation methods for gathering data, as well as interviewing randomly some of the library users as they came to make use of the facilities. 600 questionnaires were distributed at the various services points in the main library, and also at the various Faculty and Departmental libraries using research assistants. The sample size of 600 was based on the number of registered users within a period of six months January to June 2009. Records showed that 563 users registered within this period. 416 questionnaires were returned giving a 69% response rate.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Six hundred questionnaires were distributed and four hundred and sixteen (416) were returned, giving a 69% response rate. Of this amount, 19 i.e. 3% were not usable due to improper filling of responses thus, 397 were analyzed giving a 66% response rate. The distribution was done randomly as the students came into the main library or the faculty or departmental libraries. 229 males (58%) and 152 females (38%) as well as 16 (4%) who did not indicate their gender constituted the population of the study. Their ages ranged from 16 years to above 50 in the following pattern.

“Take in Table I”.

The level of study of the respondents indicated that most were postgraduate students i.e. 150 (38%) followed by 75 (19%) 400 level students were 100 level students. 36 (9%) 100 level students, 34 (9%) 200 level students, 33 (8%) 300 level students, and only 10 (3%) 500 level students responded as well. 21 (5%) did not indicate their level of study and 38 (10%) were U.I. staff, lecturers, or users from outside the University of Ibadan. On the question of whether they used modern ICT resources in the Kenneth Dike Library, 197 (49.6%) responded in the affirmative, while 199 (50.1%) responded negatively. One respondent did not indicate use. A few of those who gave a negative response - (3) however said they had used ICT resources elsewhere and not in the Kenneth Dike Library. The types of ICT used in the library by respondents were questioned. Multiple responses were elicited, thus many options were chosen. 49 respondents claimed that they had not used the ICT resources provided in the library, but would like to use the resources that have been provided. They expressed the need to send and receive e-mail, search the Internet and print documents.

“Take in Table II”.

The table above shows the types of resources that are generally needed by the library users. It expressed their priorities in information sourcing. Textbooks and Internet search are the most needed resources, followed by journals, OPAC, and reference books, newspapers and thesis. An attempt was made to find out the level of satisfaction with the library's services and compare the previous use of the manual system with the current one of ICT. The data gathered revealed that 14 (3.5%) respondents only are very satisfied with the services, 77 (19.4%) are satisfied, 118 (29.7%) are fairly satisfied, 84 (21.2%) are undecided as to their satisfaction or not, while 53 (13.4%) did not indicate what they felt. The respondents fairly satisfied, satisfied and very satisfied totaling 209 respondents i.e. 52.6%, seems to point to the fact that the library is performing a little above average. Only 51 (12.9%) indicated total non-satisfaction and even though many refrained from commenting, a sizeable number - (52) could be for or against. Comparison between the manual and ICT systems revealed that a very large proportion of respondents 298 (75%) opined that modern ICT is better than manual systems. Only 21 (5.3%) indicated preference for the manual system. 41 (10.3%) did not make any choices, 35 (8.8%) commented that Modern ICT is inadequate and 2 (0.5%) said the

manual system is inadequate. This result shows that ICT is felt to be a welcome development in the library. In all, the data gathered is indicative of the fact that information sourcing through modern ICT is desirable in this new age and that the Kenneth Dike Library is making efforts in the provision of this information.

Ranked level of satisfaction		Ranked Comparison of ICT with Manual	
Very satisfied	= 14	Modern ICT Better	= 298
Fairly Satisfied	= 118	Not indicated	= 41
Undecided	= 84	Modern ICT Inadequate	= 35
Satisfied	= 77	Manual Better	= 21
Not Satisfied	= 51	Manual Inadequate	= 2
Not indicated	= 53		

N=397 Where N = Total No. of Respondents

Improvements are however required in the following areas as tabulated below in table III.

“Take in Table III”

Majority of the respondents i.e. 110 suggested that provision of more user points is desirable so as to improve the ICT use in the library, while 93 respondents want provision of stable power supply, and request for periodical user education programmes are called for by 67 respondents. Training and retraining of staff employed was suggested by 44 respondents as well as employment of more trained staff should also be priority was suggested by 49 respondents. Adequate maintenance of the facilities is another crucial issue that should be addressed. 38 respondents suggested this. These formed the areas of concern of the users. 33 respondents also felt that users should be given more time access to the ICT resources than hitherto, and that the library should create awareness for the new library services being offered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is the need for university libraries to move from traditional reliance on external funding such as donor and government support, especially in the area of information and communication technologies (ICTs), to self-generating funds and other alternative funding sources. Libraries should be well funded and not treated as a pure “donation” or “dumping” ground. Appropriate application of ICT can also be used to strengthen and expand both locally generated content in the form of scholarly papers (grey literature) and access to international cultural literacy. Library staff skills should be upgraded. They should undergo constant training and retraining. The Library’s infrastructures and capacity need to be strengthened. Buildings, equipment and other supporting infrastructure should be properly maintained. Where changes need to be effected, it should be as and when due. Education of users in time with the new ICTs introduced should be vigorously pursued. This makes ICT less cumbersome and frightening for the user. Every journal that is offered free should not be included in the collection unless its continuous donation is guaranteed. The library should also endeavour to purchase an electricity generating plant or gain access to a functional one so as to avoid the embarrassment of erratic power supply that hampers the smooth working of modern ICT.

CONCLUSION

Modern ICT has greatly affected the information sourcing of library users. As a result of this, librarians and other users of information must adapt to the changing technological environment in order to be able to use electronic resources and access tools, respond to new user information needs, participate in the national, regional and global infrastructure. Above all, information sourcing in an ICT dependent environment is one that needs stable and reliable infrastructure base. Constant electricity supply must be ensured to be able to provide adequate access to the ICT facilities. In a library setting, getting the needed materials to the potential user is of vital importance and the skills of the librarian or information provider is especially called for, hence training and retraining to meet the challenges of the changing ICT world must be carried out. Users of the information also should be carried along in this education so as not to create a gap in the information flow. Funding is a major constraint, but if enough effort is made by information providers, government and donor agencies, information sourcing will become a much more enjoyable venture via modern ICT than it presently is.

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