Availability and Use of Serial Collections by Post Graduate Students in Nigerian Universities

Owolabi, K.K.
yomiowolabi2000@yahoo.com

Aderibigbe, N.A.
rabshittu@yahoo.com

Okorie C.N.
okorenancy@yahoo.com

Ibrahim, R.O.
ibrorasaki@yahoo.co.uk
Nimbe Adedipe Library,
University of Agriculture,
Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria.

Abstract
The study examines the availability and use of serial collections by post graduate students in Nigerian universities. Simple random sampling technique was used to select six hundred and sixty nine post graduate students from four universities in the country. A questionnaire was used as the main instrument of data collection. The findings revealed that all serial units used for the study have journals, newspaper, magazines, CD-ROM data base and online journals and the major reason for using the serials is basically for research purposes. The paper recommends that the university managements should make reasonable budgets for serials section in order to subscribe to relevant and educative serial materials and information communication and technology resources should be made available in the serials.

Keyword: Availability, use, serials, collections, post graduate, students, Nigerian Universities.

Introduction
Library is an educational tool which constitutes important components in the infrastructure of knowledge in university research and teaching, particularly for post graduate students to make information accessible to them. Library’s operations are divided into various sections which include; Reference section, Technical section, and Serials section etc.
The importance of serial collections cannot be over emphasized in library’s operations particularly in academic and the university libraries, because it provides the users with up-to-date information that can assist them in their academic pursuit.
It is in support of this that Attama and Ezema (2002) defined serials as publications issued in successive parts, appearing at intervals bearing numerical or chronological designations and intended to continued indefinitely. The term thus embraces such materials as periodicals, magazines, annuals which include reports, yearbooks, directories, proceedings, and transactions etc.
Serials formed the backbone of research collections as a result academic libraries can not do without it because of the usefulness to researchers, scholars, and investigators. They see serial collections as sine qua non to the development of research activities in academic environment. Lawal (2000) maintained that serial collections are very important to post graduate students because it provides collection of
documents that report current scientific and technological research findings, as well as social, historical and economic reports.

**Significant of The Study**
Serials contain the most current information in any field of study and constitute an invaluable component of a university library stock. Building a respectable collection of serials in a university library is to satisfy the various disciplines and regularly update it’s collections in order to provide affordable information and services to the users. Since university libraries are to support learning, teaching and research, the role of serials in achieving these can not be over emphasized. However, ill stock of serials creates disaffection and distrust between the library and the users. Despite the colossal amount of the resources usually committed to serials in most of the university libraries in the country the use of the section is not encouraging. It is in line with this that the paper investigates the use of serials collections among the post graduate students in Nigeria university libraries.

**Literature Review**
Serials are essential tool of teaching and research in academic endeavor and remain a potential tool for dissemination of knowledge .It is in support of this that Attama and Ezema (2002) stated the importance of serials in academic environment particularly for post graduate students which include the followings:

- Serial provide up –to -date information on any issue than textbooks.
- It supplies scientific and discoveries and results of latest findings.
- It makes researchers frequent and current in the frontiers of knowledge.
- It provides a first hand and detailed information on a particular subject and also it provides empirical evidence on issue being treated.

It is not again saying that scholarly journals occupied important position in the extension of knowledge and they are considered as principal medium for disseminating knowledge Aina (1995) remarked that “several studies have revealed the position of the serials as a major medium of communication in scientific researches”

Olanlokun and Salisu (1985) maintained that post graduate students need the serials collections because it provides latest information on various subjects and not only that it also serve as immediate avenue for the provision of up to date bibliographic data on given specialized area of knowledge. Ogbonyomi (2008) wrote on the significant of serial collections to post graduate students, that serial collections are one of the major media through which research findings are published for the use of other researchers in their studies, he went further to say that journals help in communicating research findings to immediate and the outside world.
Milne (1999) stated that post graduate students need academic journals which are scholarly communicative, and he described it “as the social phenomenon whereby intellectual and creative activities are passed from one scholar to another”. He observed that scholarly communications could happen in two ways: Formal and informal. According to him formal communication involves written articles, which are usually found in journals, while the informal communication can be provided at conferences, discussion groups and general networking.

Chigbu (2004) stated that National University Commission (NUC) in allocating library vote give 60% of the library allocation to serial collections while 40% is given to purchase books. Salaam (2000) gave reasons why university libraries spent more on serial collections than books because serials provide up–to-date information and at the same time it has low subscription cost. Ehikhamon (2003) stated that 77.5% of Nigerian scientists rated serials as “important” or “very important” source of getting current information in conducting researches. On the other hand, Azubigu and Madu (2001) cited by Omotayo (2010) observed that library users at Imo State University resorted to the use of internet to search for information because the university library lack funds to subscribe to scholarly and research journals.

Adhikari (2000) discussed ways of processing serials materials which start with the acquisition which includes ordering, checking-in, claiming, payment and accounting. Osie–Bonsu (1994) conducted a studied on the library of Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration. The study revealed that acquisitions were carefully evaluated in terms of their intrinsic values, intellectual level and their appropriateness to the user groups.

Adio (2005) and Salaam(2000) highlighted various problems facing the serials in Nigerian university libraries which include, funds, human resources, acquisition problem and poor attitude of the users.

Objectives of The Study

- To identify the type of serial collections available for the post graduate students;
- To identify ways of accessing the serial collections;
- To find out the level of usage of serial collections;
- To identify the reason for the use of serial collections;
- To identify hindrances to the use of serial collections;
Methodology
The study used a descriptive survey design was adopted, which allow for maximum information response from the respondents. The questionnaire was distributed to the post graduate students in their various halls of residence. The justifications for using postgraduate students was based on the fact that they have gone through first degree and are now in better academic position to understand and respond to issues raised in the study. The study was carried out over a period of four months between April – July, 2011. The target population of the study were the post graduate students of four universities in the country. The reasons for choosing the universities was basically their years of establishment The universities are the University of Ibadan, Ibadan, is the first university in the country founded in 1948 as an affiliate of University College London, Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife is one of the first generation universities in the country and was founded in 1962, Lagos State University, is one of the second generation universities and the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State is one of the third generation universities in Nigeria. A simple random technique was used to select 800 post graduate students in these four universities. 200 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the post graduate students in each of the universities making a total number of 800 copies. Out of which 669 useable copies were retrieved representing 83.6% response rate. This is represented in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Questionnaire distributed</th>
<th>Questionnaires Returned</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lagos State University, Lagos</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obafemi Awolowo University Ile Ife, Osun State</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Ibadan, Ibadan</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 sought to discuss the available serial collections that are available it was discovered that all the university libraries under the study have journal publications, newspapers, magazines CD-ROM database and On-line journals. When the respondents were asked to identified the one that is always available to them. 286(43%) agreed that they made use of journals, while 86(13%) admitted that they visited the serials to read newspapers and the magazines. 94(14%) confirmed that they made use of the CD-ROM any time they visit the serials. 203(30%) agreed that they used On-line journals in the serials.

**TABLE 3:** Search Pattern

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pattern of search</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By browsing the racks and shelves</td>
<td>312</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask staff</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask a colleagues</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directional sign</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Periodicals catalogue cabinet/pc with the serial database</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 sought to identify the major ways of identifying the collections in the serials unit of the library. It was revealed that browsing through the selves and racks are the major ways of searching for the collections in serials. 181(27.1%) agreed that they asked the library staff on how they can locate collections in the shelves.

**TABLE 4: Frequency of Use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Responded rate</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once a day</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a year</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>05.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>669</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 sought to find out the frequency of use of serials. It was revealed that the majority of the respondents agreed that they used the serials once a week, this was supported with 333(50%). While 161 (24%) claimed that they used the materials every day.

**TABLE 5: Reason For Using Serials Collections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For research purposes</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For employment opportunity</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current information</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To borrow serials materials</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>21.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 identified the major reason for the use of serial collections, it was revealed that majority of the respondents 290 (43.3%) admitted that they used the serial collections purposely for research purposes and 145 (21.7%) admitted they used the serial collections in order to borrow serial materials.

**TABLES 6: Problems Facing The Use Of Serial Collections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of up to date serial collections</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft and mutilations</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor internet service</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>669</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 examined the problems facing the post graduate students when using the serial collections it was revealed that the 225 (38.1%) confirmed that lack of up–to–date serial collections as the major problem facing them in the use of serial collections.

**Discussion of The Findings**

One of the findings of the study revealed that all the university libraries under the study have the followings serials collections which are journals, newspapers, magazines CD-ROM and online journals. Another finding revealed that browsing the racks and shelves are the major ways of searching for serial collections. This supported the finding of Osei- Bonsu (1994) that majority of students at Ghana Institution of Management and Public Administration browse through the racks and shelves when looking for serial collections in the library.

It is also revealed that majority of the post graduate students used the serials collections. Another finding revealed that research purpose is the major reason for using serial collections this supported
the findings of Olanlokun and Salisu(1985) and Milne (1999) that serial collections provide accurate, timely and relevant information to post graduate students in conducting researches. It was also discovered that lack of up-to-date serial collections is the major problem facing the post graduate students in the use of the collections. This may not be far from poor budget allocations to libraries and Salaam(2000) pointed out "Nigerian academic library serials budgets are not growing sufficiently to accommodate increased serials costs".

Conclusion

The study reveals that all the four university libraries have newspapers, magazines, journals, CD-ROM data base, and online journals. This is a good development to the development of serials collections in the country. The knowledge of users education among the post gradates students are not encouraging this shows when they go directly to shelves without consulting the pointers such as serial cataloguing box or serial OPAC. However, the entire post graduate admitted that they used the serials. Not availability of current and relevant serials collections were identified as the major hindrance facing the use of serials.

Recommendations

- There is a need for various university managements to increase their allocation to serial section of the library.
- Information and communication technology resources should be provided for serials in order to keep the users abreast with the latest in the world of information.
- There is a need for proper orientations on the use of serial collections particularly for post graduate students.
- Also experience librarians should be in charge of serials section of the library.

References


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