Library Use Characteristics of Undergraduates in Nigeria University of Science and Technology

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Abstract
This study employed a survey method to explore the library use characteristics of undergraduates in a Nigerian University; Ondo State University of Science and Technology (OSUSTECH). The university started academic activities during the 2010/2011 session with four departments and ten academic programmes. Questionnaires were used to gather data from the entire student population, 426 students. 332 undergraduates (78%) completed and returned copies of the questionnaire. Analysis of the returned questionnaires revealed that the respondents make use of the library for few days per week and only for academic purposes. They consult reference sources and subject textbooks which they wanted in both print and electronic formats while their previous knowledge of school library use and library instruction programmes positively influenced the undergraduates’ use of library. The study in conclusion recommended involvement of the undergraduates in collection development activities of the library, acquisition of both electronic and print titles, and current awareness services on library’s acquisition, functions and services.

Introduction
Academic libraries have become inextricable components of tertiary education in the whole world today. Consequently, all academic units in tertiary institutions especially universities revolve round their academics libraries. In Nigeria, establishment and maintenance of adequately stocked libraries are crucial to the accreditation of academic programmes in Nigerian universities by the National University Commission (NUC). This body is responsible for quality specifications and control of all the universities in Nigeria, and prospective ones. This is because academic libraries acquire, process and disseminate information sources in print and electronic
formats. It was in the light of this postulation that Arthur, Brafi, and Kuranchie (2013) described academic libraries as high ways to the forest of intellectual ideas. Libraries serve as the powerhouse for academic activities by carefully selecting, processing and storing relevant information that could be retrieved to meet both academic and leisure demands of all members of the university community.

There is an inevitable need for undergraduate to make use of the academic libraries in the cause of their academic pursuit. Academic and research staff of the universities equally benefit from the use of academic libraries in their institutions. Adeniran (2011) confirmed these when he posited that academic libraries in universities serve two complementary purposes; they support universities curricular and research activities of faculty members and students. Also, Banting et.al (2008) reported that academic libraries play a significant role towards the achievement of the goals of tertiary institution. They further averred that academic institutions would hardly be able to provide for the academic, intellectual and information needs of staff and students without the services of good libraries. Their reasons for these are because library and information services have been noted as essential to the accomplishment of researches and successful teaching and learning.

Furthermore, De Jager (2002) considered academic libraries valuable for teaching, learning and research. They also have the potential to affect students’ educational outcome and gain. Jubb and Green (2007) also concluded on the importance of the academic libraries that the libraries have played crucial role in supporting research and learning in all disciplines within their host institutions. Academic libraries are able to play these supportive roles through their various services. Services provided by academic libraries are available to staff and students of their host institutions, student from other institutions and recognized members of their respective immediate communities. These individuals or group are referred to as users in this study.

Literatures have established the functions, services, relevance and indispensability of academic libraries to staff and students in universities, especially in Nigeria. However, the focus of this study is to identify the library use characteristics of undergraduates in a Nigerian university of science and technology. It also focused on finding out the differences between school library use and the use of academic library.

The University Library

The Library and Information Resources Centre of OSUSTECH came into existence with the commencement of academic activities in the university on January 2011. The mission of the centre is to provision of primary literature sources and information services in both print and electronic versions in support of the educational and research activities of the university.

Operations and services to library users commenced at the centre on March 1, 2011 with three (3) professional Librarians and eight (8) support staff in junior cadre. The primary users of OSUSTECH Library and Information Resource Centre are the students and staff of the university. The centre is a reference library to the university community, the parent state, Nigeria and the whole world. The library comprises of four (4) sections at present. The first being the Technical Services section, other sections are Readers’ Services, Serial/Reference section and Database section.
Statement of the Problem

The academic library in Ondo State University of Science and Technology (OSUSTECH) exist to support academic objectives of the university and provide for information need of staff and students of the university. However, lack of statistical data and empirical research with evidence-based reports that could guide the university and library management in their line of developmental projects and services that could have a direct bearing on the university library patrons was identified by the authors. Hence, this paper sought to generate data that could be relied upon by the management as an official report of the current state of affairs in the newly established university library, considering its importance to the overall success of the academic programmes of the university. In addition, this study would contribute to knowledge in the area of users’ study in library and information services delivery.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to find out the library use characteristics of undergraduates in a Nigerian university, OSUSTECH.

The specific objectives are to

- Find out the demographic variables of the users such as their gender, age discipline/programme, and level of study
- Find out the users frequency of library visit.
- Identify their reasons for using the library
- Find out their format of information sources
- Ascertain the information sources being consulted by the users
- Find out the relationship between the school library use and use of academic library by the users
- Investigate the influence of library introduction programme on the users’ library visit, and the ease with which the users are able to find desired information sources.

Research Questions

In order to realize the above objectives of the study, attempts are made to answer the under listed questions:

1. What are the demographic variables, gender, age distribution, discipline, and level of study of the respondents?
2. How often do the respondents of this study visit their academic library?
3. What are their reasons for using the library?
4. What are the information sources being consulted by the respondents?
5. What is the information format preference of the respondents?
6. Does the use of school libraries by the respondents have influence on their use of academic libraries?
7. Do the library use instructions being provided by OSUSTECH influence their library visit?
8. Does the library use instruction of the university have influence on their ability to retrieve information sources?
Literature Review

Academic library use studies have evolved over the years. The problem of under-utilization of library resources is a global one. Various user researches have probed user attitudes as well as the characteristics of use, reasons for library visits, and factors related to the use of the different types of library materials. Knapp (1959) found widespread lack of understanding among faculty members about what a library really is and how to use it. Katebi (1977) surveyed the reading habits of students at the University of Tehran and found that students do not look at reading as a way of acquiring knowledge or developing character, primarily because of deficiencies in the educational system. Mann (1974) revealed during his research in Britain, that undergraduates are able to complete their courses of study with relatively little use of library books.

Ajibero (1995) sees the university library as the heart of the university and no other single non-human factor is as closely related to the quality of university education. The philosophy of librarianship is based on the concept of service and the provision of relevant materials for users. Professional Librarians have continued the struggle of collecting and organizing printed and other forms of recorded knowledge in order to satisfy both present and future users.

Librarians have information dissemination as their predominant function. The library has a unique position as a potential educational force. For this role, library holdings are organized for maximum exploitation by users. The effectiveness of a library as an instrument of education is determined by the success with which it is able to provide the user with information he/she seeks. The library can fulfill this function best by pursuing a policy of constant self-evaluation in order to be alert to the changing needs of its users. Students’ academic work suffers because of failure to use the library resources to its fullest potential. Satisfying users’ needs in the academic libraries should be academic objective of libraries and librarians. Librarians and library administrators are expected to provide the best possible quality service to their users. It can be concluded that attempts at assessing the students’ use of the library has focused attention on the library and its position as a potential educational force. The library stores a lot of information and the importance of information in all human endeavours is becoming overwhelming in this era of information technology. Information is presently used to measure the wealth of a nation, hence, information rich countries are also economically wealthy ones.

Students use of books and libraries in academic institutions depend largely on faculty attitudes towards the library, its role in the educational process, and the way faculty promote and encourage students’ use of the library by way of their own examples as well as their teaching methods. There have been many studies of academic library use. Williams (1995) surveyed Canadian undergraduate library use, and found that active learners who participate more in class, and who read, write and study more are regular and active library users. Fowowe (1989) found differences in the frequency of library use by faculty and students, and that 94.8% of students use library facilities. Olanlokun (1982) found that students use the library for class work, research, discussions, leisure, and other purposes. Guskin (1996) emphasizing reports that library use promotes active learning and thus contributes to students' ability to think critically and work well independently and in a group. Ajayi (1993) notes that students who do not appreciate the value of the library are at a disadvantage, and may visit the library to only read for examinations. Unomah (1996) finds that faculty has the major responsibility for students' use or lack of use of
Whitemire (2001) contends that changes in user patterns have implications for university library services such as reference and institution.

Ajibero (1998), and Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) find that Nigerian university libraries do not meet user expectations. As a result, most students do not learn how to use the library and are not aware of the relationship of the library to their studies. Authors such as Boakye (1999) and Rosch (2003) have examined the differences between independent variables of user education and journal collections and library use. None of these studies provided empirical evidence on the effect of users’ characteristics on their use of library services, although they show difference in library use among students from different disciplines. Specific user related characteristics that have been measured in the past according to Powell (1997) includes frequency of library and information use, reasons for use, types of library information use, attitudes and opinions regarding libraries, reading patterns, level of satisfaction, demographic data, personality, lifestyle and awareness of library services.

The literature reveals that rising university costs have made students more selective in choosing a university. Andaleeb and Simmonds (1998) find that students expectations of libraries vary, making it imperative to better understand and define specific student needs. Leckie and Fullerton (1999) assert that information literacy skills are desirable across disciplines, especially in science and engineering, but that professional associations do not necessarily support that. Eskola (1998) found large differences in how students of different disciplines use the library. Hiller (2001) recommends a strategic plan that will "develop and implement a study to identify user populations, their information needs and how well they are to be met." Christopher and Menon (1995) observe that one element of high quality service is the "incorporation of user personal needs and expectations into the development of programs and service." According to them, the continued success of a service organization depends on the organization's ability to adjust its products and services to correspond to user needs. Many authors have summarized patron surveys in which they noted that age, academic discipline (education), and income rate are significant determinants of library use in more than 90 percent of the studies using these variables. Sharma (1988) observed that at the undergraduate level, students are mindful of acquiring qualifications and would like to work on prescribed courses of study. Level of academic study increases familiarity with and use of libraries.

Authors like Ehikhamenor (1990), Ifidon (1997), Lubans (1998), and Adelani, (2002) agree on the need to provide information for all categories of users. Goje (1995) notes that students must have access to all resources available in the library. Mathacidesona (1997) asserts that the traits that influence information requirements of library users are qualification, years of study, motivation, and interest. Zaki (1991) observe that low-income students may have less knowledge of library facilities.

Various things affect students' decision to attend a particular institution. Andaleeb and Simmonds (1998) state that the socio-economic level of parents is a crucial factor. The quality of services the library provides is also a factor. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) attribute this to students' financial problems, because many do not have enough money to purchase even the required texts, which are unavailable in the local market, even if the students had the funds to purchase them. The Nigerian undergraduate depends heavily on library resources. Feather and Sturges
(1997) emphasize the growing consensus that for libraries to be truly effective, they must be concerned with their performance, and that the most meaningful indicators of performance are user-oriented.

**Methodology and Procedure for Data Collection**

A survey research design was used in this study. The target population are students of Ondo State University of Science and Technology OSUSTECH. The population of students in this university is four hundred and twenty-six as at 2012/2013 session. Total enumeration technique was employed by using the entire students’ population for the study. This comprises 100 level (229 students), 200 level (112 students) and 300 level (85 students) totalling 426.

Questionnaire was the main instrument used to gather data for the study. The questionnaire was close-ended and it was divided into two (2) sections; section A on Demographic data, and section B on the library use characteristics of the respondents. Four hundred and twenty-six (426) copies of the questionnaire were produced and administered to the respondents in their respective departments while 332 (78%) copies were duly completed, returned and found useful. The questionnaires were administered towards the end of first semester of 2012/2013 session. The data obtained were analysed, presented and discussed in the next section of this report.

**Data Analysis and Discussions**

The rate of return of the questionnaire was considerable, 332 copies of the questionnaire out of the 426 copies administered were duly completed and returned. This represent 78% rate of return. The table 1 below shows rate of return by department in the university.

**Table 1: Retrieved Questionnaire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Administered</th>
<th>Retrieved</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological science</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>77.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical science</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>60.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematical science</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>79.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical science</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>75.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Demographic data of the respondents indicate that 224 respondents (67%) are male and the remaining 108 respondents (23%) are female. Their age distribution 15 – 19 years, 193 respondents (58%) 20 – 24 years, 103 respondents (31%) and 36 respondents (11%) are between 25 years and above (see table 2 and 3 below)

**Table 2: Gender Distribution of the Respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>67.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>32.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analyses of the respondents’ frequency of library visit indicate that all of them make use of their library at varying degree. Specifically 56 respondents (17%) use library few days in a week; 63 respondents (19%) use of library once a week; 86 respondents rarely use it and 17 respondents (05%) only make use of library during examinations. See table below.

**Table 3: Frequency of library visit by the respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few days in a week</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During examination only</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>332</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents’ reasons for visiting or using their institution’s library are diverse. These range from academic and leisure reading to social purposes. Analyses of respondents’ reasons for using library indicate the following base on the frequency of responses.

- For academic work, studying and examination (33)
- For textbooks and journal consultation (322)
- For reference purposes (306)
- For borrowing of books and other library resources (289)
- For newspapers and magazines consultation (163)
- For the use of electronic resources based in the library (86)
- To spend time between classes (63 respondents)
- To socialise/meet with friends (63 respondents)

It could be observed that responses reported above are more than the respondents. This is because respondents are allowed to tick more than one option as there could be multiple reasons for using a library.

Information resources in the library are for the use of the respondents and other users within the location of an academic library. The respondents were asked to indicate information sources they consult while in the library. Analysis of their response revealed that textbooks and reference sources are mostly consulted. 105 respondents (32%) each indicated this. 46 respondents (20%) visited the library to consult journal titles; 24 respondents (0.7%) visited the library to make use of newspapers, magazines and other serial publications. Past examination questions and university publications were consulted by 32 respondents (19%). These findings are presented below:

**Information Sources Consulted by the Respondents**
The respondents’ information source format preference was sought. Analysis of data obtained on this indicated that the respondents have mixed preference. 125 respondents (38%) preferred both print and electronic information sources. 114 respondents (34%) however, preferred print sources, and 93 respondents (28%) have preference for electronic resources. These findings revealed that despite the pervasive influence of electronic information resources, information users still prefer print sources. See the table below:

**Information source format preference of the respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information source format</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Print sources</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic sources</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both print and electronic sources</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Age Distribution of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 – 19 years</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 – 24 years</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 years and above</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academically, the respondents spread across the entire academic programme in each of the four departments in the University at the moment. Specifically the study has the following respondents from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Prior knowledge and skill in the use of library at school or college level may have positive influence on undergraduate library use. The respondents’ school library uses have fairly significant influence on the respondents’ use of academic library in their institution. 173 respondents (52%) confirmed this. However, 121 respondents (37%) reported that school library uses have influence on their use of library, and 38 respondents (11%) indicated it has any influence. See table

**Influence of School Library on Respondents use of Academic Library**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significant influence</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly significant influence</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little influence</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No influence at all</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another factor that could positively influence use of academic library by undergraduate is library instruction or user education programme. This is considered tremendous by thirty-seven (37) respondents (11%) and fairly tremendous by 179 respondents (54%). However, 116 respondents (35%) considered the influence less tremendous. Table below graphically explain these findings.
Influence of library instruction programme on the use of academic library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tremendous</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly tremendous</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less tremendous</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No influence at all</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the objectives of library instruction programme is the inculcation of information retrieval skills in the undergraduates. Analysis of data on the impact of library instruction of the respondents ability to locate and retrieve desired information resources indicate that 43 respondents (13%) could locate and retrieve desired resources; 179 respondents (54%) reported that they could find their desired resources, and 110 stated that they could rarely access needed information sources. See table below:

Table: Library Instruction and Ability to Retrieve Desired Resources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary and Discussion of Findings

The emphasis of the study is on exploring the library use characteristics of undergraduate in a Nigerian University of science and technology (OSUSTECH) the university commenced academic activities during the 2010/2011 session. The significance of this study is hinged on the need to find out the use characteristics of the users in order to be able to serve them better.

Three hundred and thirty two undergraduate responded to the survey. This is made up of 224 male (67%) and 108 female (23%); their age range is between 15 and 25 years; and they are spread across the entire 10 academic programme in the 04 departments of the institutions. Their library use characteristics are as follows

- Majority of them (110 respondent) use library for few days per week;
- Their major reason for using the library are for academic work (studying and examination) and; for consequent upon the above, references, textbooks and Journals consultations;
- Consequent upon the above, reference sources and textbooks are the most frequently used library resources by the respondents and;

- The respondents preferred both print and electronic information sources. 125 respondents (38%) established this.

Also, two factors that could activate library use among the respondents were explored. These factors are previous library use skill, and library instruction programmes. Influence of school library use is considered significantly by the respondents, and the influence of library instruction programmes is regarded tremendous. The respondents disclosed that the level of library instruction programmes offered by the university is enough to enable them retrieve desired information sources most of the time. 179 respondents (54%) signified this.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Academic libraries in universities are knowledge centres that provide information sources for teaching, learning and research. The information sources in the collection of a library are organized and made available to users, staff and students for knowledge enhancement and development. Undergraduates make use of academic libraries in the course of their study and for other academic purpose. They often consult reference books, textbooks on various disciplines and journals. They however want these sources to be in print and electronic formats.

School library use experience and library instruction programmes positively influence library use of the undergraduates. These two factors were positively disposed to in the study.

Consequent upon the above conclusions, the following recommendations are proffered:

- The library management should encourage more use of its resources by acquisition of current textbooks and journals and other resources. The library should also be made more sensitive to the users needs and include them in their collection development activities.
- Pleasant and ready to assist personnel, promote library use by the undergraduates. In order to ensure this, user-librarian collaboration should be established and promoted in the university.
- The library environment should be improved upon. It should be made more aesthetically inviting and noiseless as much as possible. Also, auxiliary services such as photocopying services, referral services, internet services etc can be provided by the library. These could raise the patronage of the library.
- The collection development practices of the library should integrate both print and electronic resources.
- Electronic information sources and access facilities in the library should be improved upon. This will provide ample opportunity to users that may want to use them.
- The library instruction programmes being provided to the students should be improved upon. It should be made more practical so that the undergraduates can really learn the act of information retrieval.
- Library acquisitions, services and other activities should be communicated to the undergraduates and other users. This can be achieved through efficient current awareness services.
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