

Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Undergraduates in Ajayi Crowther University Oyo State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated information needs and seeking behavior of undergraduates in Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo Nigeria. The aim was to determine undergraduate students' academic information needs and seeking behavior, to establish the problems encountered in the process of information seeking, and suggest strategies for developing healthy information seeking behavior. The survey research was carried out, with samples drawn respondents from all the three faculties in the University, namely; faculties of Humanities, Natural sciences, with Social and management sciences. The three faculties have fifteen (15) departments all together. The sample consisted of 145 undergraduates. Questionnaire was used for data collection and data collected was analyzed using percentages. The results gave an insight into the factors that influenced Undergraduates' academic information needs which include: examination, assignment, research and personal development. Also, findings from this study revealed that information needs of undergraduates are gender-based; males like sport and politics-related information, while females like beauty and fashion-based information. The study makes recommendations that could improve Undergraduates' information seeking behavior.

Keywords: Information, Information needs, Information seeking behavior

INTRODUCTION

It is frequently believed that we live in the information age, because nearly every day we learn some new development through information technology. The human need for information is growing, as our society grows to depend more and more on information to survive and flourish. As all need to be able to find facts, but we also need information on particular subjects. Not just the bare facts, but their evaluation and assimilation into our own frame of reference. Atinmo (2012) remarked ‘we live in a world of explosions, from nuclear bombs to improvised bombs. One explosion that is seemingly harmless by comparison, yet it is felt by everyone every day is the information explosion’ Thus, access to information is imperative in support of decision making and reduction of uncertainties. Just as information need arises every day; seeking behavior varies from users, meanwhile information resources

are available in different formats. The information seeking behavior of users is mostly determined by their pressing information need, hence Assefa (2009) says ‘in the digital era, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have proven to be indispensable tools in the sharing and dissemination of knowledge without discrimination. ICTs can be employed to give users quick access to knowledge from a wide range of people, communities and cultures.

The whole world now uses information more than ever before because the value of information in this age is dynamic and useful in different capacity both in decision-making, policy formulation, personal development and problem solving. Information is an instrument that leads to knowledge acquisition and is capable of transforming the knowledge-state of the recipient. Knowledge on the other hand is a key cause of development in the world at large. Yale Law School Information society (2008) explained that ‘Access to knowledge is essential for promoting human rights, economic and cultural development, innovation, individual freedom and creativity’ Hence, information worldwide recognized as an indispensable asset that has value which must be exploited and preserved.

Knowing the fact that information is meant to transform the knowledge state of the user, it is necessary to understand the immediate and potential effect of wrong information sources and seeking behavior on information needs and use of undergraduates. Information needs, as one of the challenges facing undergraduates, may not be well met, due to poor information-seeking behavior and wrong application of acquired information. Also, in as much information may be preserved for posterity, information found that has the contents of problem stated above is capable of confusing the future users, and thus result little or no reliability of such information. Other problems associated with information needs, seeking behavior and use by undergraduates are the following among others; complex information needs, lack of knowledge of available sources, inability to evaluate sources of information, information overloading (having too much information to cope with), insufficient search knowledge and ability, poor information seeking behavior, and wrong information application. The students’ information needs and poor seeking behavior was singled out as the biggest cause that needed investigation in Ajayi Crowther University, Nigeria.

The objectives of this study are to:

- Determine the information needs of the undergraduates.
- Explore sources of information available in Ajayi Crowther University, Nigeria.

- Examine the frequency of information seeking among the students.
- Investigate factors arousing information needs among Undergraduates.
- Investigate factors restraining students to healthy information seeking behavior.
- Determine demographic data of undergraduates in Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo Nigeria.

In order to achieve the objectives stated, this study would be guided by the following research questions:

- What are the information needs of the undergraduates in Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo?
- Where do undergraduates seek for the needed academic information?
- How often do they seek those information sources?
- What are the factors that arouse the need and seeking for information by the undergraduates?
- What are the challenges to healthy information seeking behavior of Undergraduates in Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feather (2003) stated that, “The complex patterns of actions and interaction that people engage in when seeking information of whatever kind and for whatever purpose means information-seeking behavior. Like its companion expression ‘information needs’, its utility is more in its “denotative than its connotative power” Wilson (2005) claimed that “...the term information seeking-behavior should be adapted as behavior is observable, whereas needs being internal mental states, are not this was said because of his awareness of the difficulties in the concept of information need and suggests, that it is abandoned and replaced with information seeking- behavior” Fairer–Wessels, (1990) believed that Information seeking behavior refers to the way people search for and utilize information. Most times, students’ information seeking behavior involves active or purposeful information seeking, as a result of the need to complete course assignments, prepares for class discussions, seminars, workshops, conferences, or writes final year research papers.

Whereas, Uhegbu (2007) described information seeking-behavior as the way an information user conducts or acts when looking for, receiving or acquiring information. The utterance, gesture, anger, eagerness, reluctance, zeal or any other attribute displayed by an information user in his efforts to purchase, acquire or receive news, data, stories, or anything that may inform or misinform his knowledge or understanding of something constitute information seeking.

Wilson (2006) declared that ‘‘Many decisions are taken with incomplete information or on the basis of beliefs, whether we call these prejudices, faith or ideology. So, information-seeking may not occur at all, or there may be a time delay between the recognition of the need and the information-seeking acts; or, in the case of affective needs, neither the need nor its satisfaction may be consciously recognized by the actor; or a cognitive need of fairly low salience may be satisfied by chance days, months or even years after it has been recognized, or the availability of the information may bring about the recognition of a previously unrecognized cognitive need’’

Information-seeking behaviour results from the user’s awareness of certain needs. These identified needs leads to behavioural changes which may take several forms like consulting information system. On the other hand; the user may seek information from other people in form of Information exchange. Martin and Metcalfe (2001) acknowledged that modes of informing are specific to each person’s concern, as are the topics they want to be informed about; libraries in the past sought to accommodate this need by promoting current awareness services (CAS) and selective dissemination of information (SDI), either through print or electronic means. Reitz (2004) Information literacy which is the skill in finding the information needs of users including an understanding of how libraries are organized, familiarity with the resources they provide (including information formats, and automated search tools), and knowledge of commonly used research techniques must be well exposed to users in order to improve on their information seeking-behavior .

Moreover, problem associated with information seeking-behavior of undergraduate is information illiteracy. Feather, (2003) affirmed that ‘‘Sometimes interpreted as number one of literacy, information literacy (IL) is also described as the overarching literacy essential for twenty-first-century living’’ Today, information literacy is inextricably associated with information practices and critical thinking in the information and communication technology (ICT) environment. It is generally seen as pivotal to the pursuit of lifelong learning, and central to achieving both personal empowerments and economic development. Information literacy is commonly described as the ability to access, evaluate and use information. Feather (2003) further added that ‘‘Sometimes, information skills are considered to be one aspect of information literacy; they may also be seen as the tools that assist the development of information literacy, in the same way that study skills may assist the process of learning’’. It is very clear that information literacy is imperative in information seeking-behavior so as to

give way for smooth learning process where reliable information would be obtained which can reduce uncertainty and help in decision making.

AJAYI CROWTHER UNIVERSITY NIGERIA AT GLANCE

The Ajayi Crowther University Oyo Nigeria is a private university and was established by the Supra Diocesan Board (west) of the church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), and has its origin in the defunct Church Missionary Society (CMS) training institution, Abeokuta and the defunct St. Andrews College, Oyo, Nigeria. Having satisfied the rigorous criteria prescribed by the National Universities Commission (NUC) for the establishment of universities in Nigeria, Ajayi Crowther University (ACU) was granted license to operate as a private university in Nigeria on 7 January 2005. The University is named after the late Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first African Bishop who first translated the Bible into Yoruba language. His Episcopal Ministry covered the entire West Africa sub-continent. Academic development is seriously dependent on the quality of library located in the school. The university can boast of a library building that is imposing, and for years to come, will be most suitable and adequate for all forms of expansion as the University grows. Presently, the library can sit 1,500 users conveniently; the book holdings have increased from 3,000 in 2007 to over 20,000. The virtual Library, a critical tool of research in these modern times is an important feature of the Library. (Source: www.acu.edu.ng/)

METHODOLOGY

Survey research technique was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of both male and female undergraduates who were presently studying on full time mode at Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo Nigeria. Samples were drawn from three i.e. faculties of Humanities, Natural sciences, and Social and management sciences. The faculties are made up of fifteen (15) departments. Faculty of Humanities has two (2) Faculty of Natural Sciences has six (6), while faculty of Social and management has seven (7) departments. Simple random sampling technique was used to proportionately select the population sample from the Institution. Therefore, participants were randomly selected from each of these faculties, thereby given a total of one hundred and forty five (145) undergraduate students. Well structured questionnaire titled 'Information needs and seeking-behavior of undergraduates (INSB) was self-administered to obtain information from the respondents. The questionnaires were purposively distributed and administered among the participants who gave their assent

to partake. One hundred and forty five (145) questionnaires were administered to the respondents, and all, one hundred and forty five (145) were returned. Therefore, data analysis was based on the information from the returned questionnaire. Data analysis was done using percentages and descriptive statistics.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

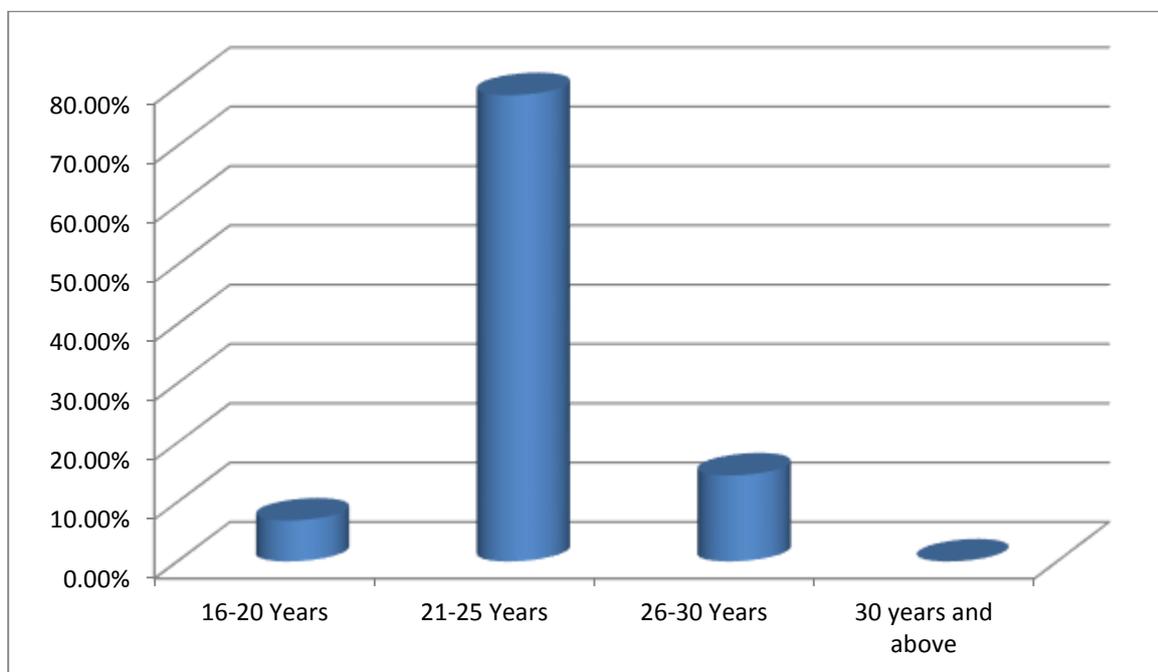
Table 1 Gender Distributions of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	65	44.8
Female	80	55.2
Total	145	100

Source: Research field survey, 2013

The gender composition table revealed that 65 (44.8%) respondents were males while 80 (55.2%) were females. The respondents cut across all the three faculties in Ajayi Crowther University, Nigeria.

Figure 1: Age Distribution of Respondents



Source: Research field survey, 2013

Figure 1 revealed that 10 (6.9%) respondents fall within the age of 10-20 years old. While 114 (78.6%) respondents were between the ages of 21-25. 21 (14.5%) respondents were between age 26-30 and no respondent for age 30 and above.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on Faculty

Faculty	Frequency	%
Social and Management Sciences	50	34.5
Humanities	48	33.1
Natural Sciences	47	32.4
Total	145	100

Source: Research field survey, 2013

Table 2 shows that 50(34.5%) respondents were from the faculty of social and management sciences. 48(33.1%) respondents were from faculty of humanities, while 47(32.4%) respondents were from the faculty of Natural Sciences.

Research Question 1: What are the information needs of the undergraduates in Ajayi Crowther University, Nigeria?

Table 3: Information needs of Undergraduates

Q2: What does your information needs mostly centered on?	Frequency	%
Entertainment	3	2.1
Academics	62	42.7
Beauty	2	1.4
Sport	7	4.8
All of the above	71	49
Total	145	100

Source: Research field survey, 2013

From table 3, 3 (2.1%) respondents indicated “entertainment” as what their information needs mostly centered on. 62 (42.7%) respondents’ information needs related to “academics”, 2 (1.4%) signified “beauty”, and 7 (4.8%) choose “sport”. Meanwhile, majority 71 (49%) respondents’ information needs centered on, all of the items listed.

Research Question 2: What are the factors that arouse the need and seeking for information by the undergraduates?

Table 4: Factors of information needs

Q5: Factors that facilitate academic information need	Frequency	%
Research	8	5.5
Examination	55	37.9
Assignment	30	20.7
Personal Development	15	10.3
Assignment and Examination	25	17.2
Personal Development, Examination and Assignment	12	8.3
Total	145	100

Source: Research field survey, 2013

Table 4 revealed that 8 (5.5%) respondents picked “research” as factor that facilitates academic information, majority 55 (37.9%) respondents selected “Examination”. 30 (20.7%) indicated “assignment”, while 15 (10.3%) choose “personal development”. 25 (17.2%) respondents indicated “Assignment and Examination” as the factors facilitating academic information.

Research Question 3: Where do Undergraduates seek the needed academic information?

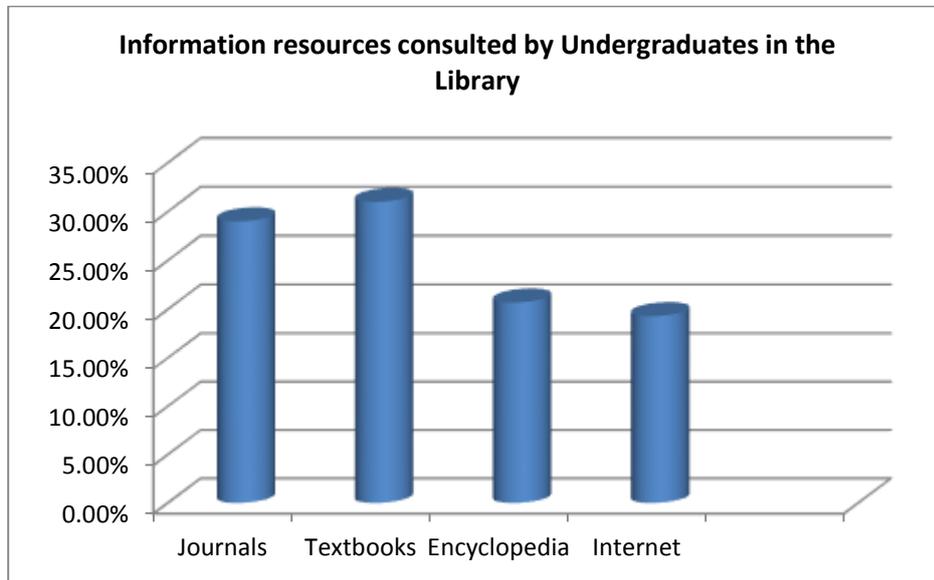
Table 5: Sources of information

Q8: Where do you visit when seeking for academic information?	Frequency	%
Library	40	27.6
ICT Center	29	20
Library and ICT Center	76	52.4
Total	145	100

Source: Research field survey, 2013

Table 5 revealed that, 40 (27.6%) respondents seek academic information from the library. While 29 (20%) respondents visits ICT Center when seeking for academic information. However, 76 (52.4%) respondents indicated the use of both Library and ICT center.

Figure 2: Information resources in the Library



Source: Research Field Survey, 2013

Figure 2 gave the analysis of how undergraduates seek academic information from different resources in the Library. 42 (29.0%) of the respondents consults Journals, while 45 (31.0%) of respondents, Textbook. Meanwhile, 30 (20.7%) of the respondents seeks academic information from Encyclopedias whereas, 28 (19.3%) respondents checks the Internet for academic information.

Research Question 4: How often do undergraduates seek academic information from Library resources?

Table 6: Frequency of academic information seeking

How regularly do you seek academic information	Frequency	%
Never	0	0
Rarely	2	1.4
Occasionally	5	3.4
Frequently	138	95.2

Total	145	100
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Source: Research field survey, 2013

Table 6 illustrates the information seeking frequency of the respondents. 2 (1.4%) of the respondents seeks academic information occasionally, while 5 (3.4%) respondents indicated ‘occasionally’ 138 (95.2%) of the respondents frequently seek academic information.

Research Question 5: What are the challenges to healthy information seeking behavior of Undergraduates in Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo Nigeria?

Table 7: Factors restraining healthy information seeking-behavior

Restrains to healthy information seeking-behavior	Agree		Disagree		Undecided	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Information illiteracy	75	51.7	50	34.5	20	13.8
Inadequate internet search skill	87	60	26	17.9	32	22.1
Unstable power supply	58	40	71	49	16	11.0
Lackadaisical attitude	56	39	76	52	13	9
Reliance on the past knowledge	74	51	53	36.6	18	12.4

Source: Research field survey, 2013

Table 7 shows the restraints to healthy information seeking-behavior. For ‘information illiteracy as a factor, 75 (51.7%) respondents selected agree; 50 (34.5%) respondents selected disagree, while 20 (13.8) selected undecided. For ‘inadequate internet search skill’ 87 (60%) of the respondents indicated agree; 26 (17.9%) indicated disagree, and 32 (22.1%) indicated undecided. For ‘unstable power supply’ 58 (40%) respondents picked agree; 71 (49%) picked disagree, while 16 (11.0) picked undecided. For ‘lackadaisical attitude’ 56 (39%) of the respondents indicated agree; 76 (52%) indicated disagree; while 13 (9%) indicated undecided. For ‘reliance on the past knowledge’ 74 (51%) respondents picked agree; 53 (36.6%) picked disagree, while 18 (12.4%) picked undecided.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research revealed that 71 (49%) of 145 respondents have their information needs mostly centered on more than one item. These range from academics, sports, entertainment and e.t.c. This finding is in line with Aina (2004) said that, “It is generally known that every individual, whether literate or not, has information needs. The information could be for recreation, leisure, or meeting tasks that are considered crucial to survival or information that could meet day-to-day activities or even information that is necessary for common good of the neighborhood, community and the nation in general” Aside this, there is no an Undergraduate in Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo Nigeria with single information need; they have other information needs apart from academic information need. Also it was exposed in this study that information needs has to do with interest, and interest, sometimes is gender-based. For instance, apart from academic which is general information needs of the Undergraduates, other information needs that are chosen were gender-oriented. Most female respondents choose entertainment and beauty information more than male respondents who massively selected Sport Information. This is another challenge for Librarians and information managers, who must prepare very well in order to meet the general (academic) and personal information needs of Undergraduates in Ajayi Crowther University Oyo, Nigeria.

It was also established from the study that a large 55 (37.9%) of the participants elected Examination as the only factor that facilitates academic information need and seeking process. This is an indication of poor information seeking behavior because information obtained in a time like this may be inaccurate and not sufficient, just because the user will be in haste to get anything available to him. This behavior will also make such Undergraduate a half-baked student, who reads to pass examination; not for knowledge acquisition. Meanwhile, observations over the years also show that Libraries in Nigeria records higher number of users during examination. Only 8.3 % of the respondents chosen Personal development, Examination, and Assignment as the factors facilitating information need; these ones are considered to have healthy information seeking behavior. The finding shows that Library has a lot to do in teaching reading, studying and research skills during library orientation program. The implication of undergraduates seeking academic information during examination only will make information resources in the library be under-utilized; by extension be subjected to quick deterioration when handled by many users at a time. It will

also encourage users to act against library rules and become agents of deterioration by engaging in acts like; defacing, mutilation, theft, rough-handling, and wrong shelving of library materials.

Consequently, the result of this study revealed that both the University Library and ICT center of Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo were being used by the Undergraduates. It was discovered that 27.6% of the respondents use the Library regularly, the result that is far higher than 20% of those who use ICT center. This means undergraduates that use the Library have great interest in print and non-print information resources; this affirms the relevance of traditional Library even in the emerging and changing technology of today. Library user that uses the Library will enjoy reliable information in a conducive and an organized atmosphere with the assistance of information managers-the Librarians, who are always ready to help users with the sources of information when lost. Findings from this study is in line with the opinion of Aina (2003) which maintained that “Information seeking-behavior of a user depends on education, access to Library and length of time a user wishes to devote to information seeking. But when the information required is complex, individual resort to Libraries” With 52.4 % of the respondents that uses both the Library and ICT centre, is evidence that Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has reformed the manner in which information is stored, accessed, acquired, and used. Based on this observation, it is established that there would be great increase in the use of Library and ICT center as time goes on.

Also, the study also shows that 95.2 % of the respondents frequently seek academic information. These respondents are the ones seeking academic information for personal development, examination and assignment. These are regular information seeker and effort should be made by library management to provide them with timely and well organized resources that can meet their information needs as well as help in decision making. It was clear that these are users consulting Journals, Textbooks, Encyclopedias, and the Internet as shown in Figure 2. This category of library user would from time-to-time need services like; reference, current awareness and selective dissemination of information (SDI) as well as Internet services. Library resources (both man and materials) should be properly managed by the university library for the use of these regular library users; poor condition of library resources can send these set of users away; lose interest in information services of the library; affect excellent academic performance and consequently render the library under-utilized.

Furthermore, the results of this study also exposed the factors responsible for unhealthy information seeking behavior. 51.7 % of the respondents selected information illiteracy as the factor while another 51% at another question indicated reliance on past knowledge as the factor. Both factors are very dangerous for academic excellence of undergraduates. It is expected that every undergraduate and information user be information literate; Information literacy is the ability of an information user to discover information needs, search information sources, retrieve information resources in different format, evaluate sources of information, use information and preserve information for posterity. Also, reliance on the past knowledge is a great risk; knowledge increases daily, and is made available every day. Information users are to do away with an act of rigidity; knowledge is meant to be updated. Information changes over time, and renders past knowledge insignificance or insufficient. There is need to keep up-to-date with trends and new development in user's academic discipline, this will expose the recipient of information to the universal knowledge. The burden of eradicating the problem of information illiteracy among information users is one of the major areas of concentration for the Library. Library must ensure basic information literacy as well as web search skills were taught, this is to ensure that no one lag behind in the quest to develop an information society. Attention should be given to "the use of library" as a course in the curriculum.

RECCOMENDATIONS

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- Library should embark on two extensive tasks; liaising with the teaching faculties to develop the appropriate collections, and providing a number of new digital information services that can be accessed by many users at a time.
- Undergraduates should attend conferences, seminars, workshops, and inaugural lectures so as to get current trends in their field of study. Also, they should develop interest in reading for personal development, not for examination only.
- Library management should ensure that the resources in the library are well managed and preserved; adequate maintenance measures be put in place to prevent the materials against damage as well as prolonging their life span for continuous use by the users .
- The library should develop and use a well-planned user instruction and information skills program; teaches basic information literacy courses; improve on the way current

library orientation is conducted. It should demand for funds to increase the print collections; electronic collections; including serials and reference databases; expand on the access points-probably electronically; and, increase the number of librarians serving the ever growing population of students in the University.

- Library staff should publish articles, news releases and short communications from the university news publications to enhance the sensitization mechanisms and also use the library Web page for publicity. Students should be appropriately introduced and guided into becoming an excellent information resource user so that they do not depend essentially on lecturer notes to achieve their academic and knowledge goals.
- Library management should provide printing and photocopying services in the library at a moderate cost; allowing users print the relevant information obtained on the internet and make photocopy of pages in textbooks or journals that are relevant to their academic information needs.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study have clearly shown that undergraduates in Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo Nigeria have academic information needs. An encouraging number of respondents have good information seeking-behavior in which they make use of the Library and ICT center to search and meet their academic information needs. With the number of respondents who confirmed the impact of Library and ICT center in their academic information needs, it is therefore imperative for the management team of the university and Library as well as ICT management to upgrade and maintain both human and non-human resources in these information centers for sustainable academic growth of the undergraduates. Understanding the information needs of users, taking steps to satisfy them is the first step towards effective service provision by Librarians and information professionals; this can be accomplished through formal in-depth studies. Librarians, especially those involved in bibliographic instruction should be interested in the ways information users approach the library and the methods they use to search for needed information. Librarians could redesign strategies intended to improve the provision of library services especially towards teaching information literacy skills and creating information resources awareness.

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