

USER APATHY TOWARDS LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICE: A CASE STUDY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR LIBRARY, CALABAR, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in the University of Calabar Library, Calabar, Nigeria using survey research design. The population of the study consisted of all registered undergraduate library users between the 2014 and 2015. The total population of the study was 5,244 users. Accidental sampling technique was used to select 300 respondents who constituted the sample of the study. The study sought to ascertain if there is a state of apathy toward library resources and services in the University of Calabar library. The finding showed that the level of usage of library resources and services dropped significantly between 2012 and 2015. The books borrowed from the library and the number of registered Undergraduate library users within the same period showed a remarkable decline. Insufficient seats, attitude of library staff towards users, Erratic Power supply, Students access to personal computer and smart phones, low information literacy competencies of undergraduates and inadequate information resources were identified as reasons for the state of apathy towards the library. It was recommended in the study that: Libraries with perceived incidents alluding to the prevalence of users' apathy would have to resort to awareness and advocacy programmes to woo potential users back to the library. It is important to review the library use instruction programme, the services provided by the library and the attitude of Library staff towards users. There should be conscious efforts to correct any lapse arising from the review.

KEY WORDS: User, Apathy, Library, Resources, Services, University, Calabar, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Library resources and services constitute an integral part of research, teaching and learning resources. If properly exploited, these resources and services could lead to proficiency in one's professional calling and enhances personality development. In an academic environment, where progress depends on availability and access to current and relevant information, scholars and students depends on relevant library resources and services to achieve meaningful development in research work and academic progress generally.

Library resources embody books, journals, newspapers, magazines, theses,

reports, government publications among others. These resources manifest either in print or in electronic format. The advent of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has created a different platform for expression of library resources in electronic format. These electronic resources are intended to complement and make up for the deficiencies of the physical library and its resources. IF these resources are properly organised, accessed and utilised they could lead to better and meaningful research process and outcome. Apart from organising library resources for use, libraries also render services that are capable of wooing potential users to see the library as the ideal destination for researchers and other users, especially as the cost of

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information resources and educational materials continue to increase. In developing countries like Nigeria, where the cost of books is on the high, most scholars and other library users could not afford to buy the books needed to excel in their academic pursuit. The library then becomes the interface between information seekers and the information sought by placing itself at the disposal of researcher to take advantage of its resources and services like lending and photocopying services to achieve their dreams. Thus, the library should become the rallying point for scholars and other categories of users for their information needs. This makes the library a companion, a dependable ally and a trusted source of information for scholars and the research community at large. The place of a library, as the central hub upon which research, teaching and learning activities revolves in an academic environment cannot be overemphasised.

The serene, quiet and conducive environment offered by the library is an additional strength the library possesses in the world of research, teaching and learning. Scholars needed to be engulfed in an environment devoid of distractions to be able to exercise their creative power and energy looking for outlets of expression. With this scenario, one would expect to see the libraries, especially academic libraries, as a beehive of activities by researchers and other users of the library. This is because the central focus of an academic library is its resources and services while the basic goal is client satisfaction. To achieve this goal, the development of academic library resources and services should be based on clear understanding of users' needs and how to address such needs. Users' needs should be considered beyond information needs to also include physical facilities like seats and place of convenience, which should be properly taken care of.

The University of Calabar is one of the second generations of universities in Nigeria established in 1975. The University of Calabar library has since assumed a prominent place in the academic environment by positioning itself at the centre of academic activities through improved collection development and quality service delivery. The Library initiated and commissioned its electronic library on the 19th day of December, 2012. The electronic library in the University of Calabar provides access to a number of electronic resources such as electronic databases, CD-ROM databases, open access journals and e-books. It has a capacity of

268 desktop computers and runs on both wired and wireless networks, (Bassey and Odu, 2015). By virtue of available resources and services, both physical and electronic, the University of Calabar library has been able to position itself in a proper perspective as the desired destination for research in an academic community. Capacity building is encouraged to constantly maintain an ideal workforce to reflect the status of the library. However, the worth of a library in the present age is determined not just by its resources and services, but on the users perception and extent of utilization of these resources and services. More so, libraries now emphasise usage of available resources and services as the determinant of the value or worth of a library. It is obvious that effective utilization of library resources and services, both physical and electronic, depends absolutely on the following variables: positive perception of available resources and services, level of awareness, information search skills, ICT literacy, availability of computers and availability of internet access. Each of these variables can, if properly harnessed, influence the extent of utilization of the library resources and services. However, where the above variables are not properly aligned, access to resources and services would become an obvious challenge that could lead to frustration and apathy towards library use.

Users' apathy is the apparent lack of interest or enthusiasm towards the library. It is a psychological and emotional feeling that tends to pool potential library users away from the library. The library, its resources and services would lose attraction from potential users. Many reasons could account for the state of apathy in a University library: perceived poor collection, poor service quality, frustration arising from past antecedent and inadequate or absence of library use instruction programme. According to Miliki and Uche (2007), students' non-use of library resources and services could be traceable to lack of proper orientation and user education. Similar studies that identified poor user education as the reason for the state of apathy in Nigeria University libraries included: Prytherch (2000), Awana (2000), and Osagie, (2003). In the University of Calabar, a holistic programme of user education is built into the curriculum of fresh students. The essence of this programme is to ensure that undergraduates in the University of Calabar were formally guided on how to make independent use of the library and its resources.

However, preliminary observation of library use pattern among undergraduates in the University of Calabar reveals that users lack the prerequisite skills needed for effective library use. Besides, accessibility and utilization of information in the contemporary world requires some basic literacy on the part of the information seekers. Skills in information search, computer application, internet access and ICT compliance are prerequisite for information search and retrieval. Where these basic skills are lacking, the information resources in the library, both physical and electronic resources and services, cannot be explored meaningfully. One obvious consequence of this is frustration and lack of interest towards the library. Such feelings erode users' confidence in a library's ability to meet their information needs. To a reasonable extent, this feeling of withdrawal from the library could be genuine and justified. The feeling of apathy could be so strong that even after significant improvement in the quality of library resources and services, researchers and other potential library users still turn away from the library. This invariably means that so much awareness and advocacy would be needed to change the mindset of users and create a renewed attraction for the library.

In our contemporary society, information has assumed a prominent place as the pivot of knowledge, a business facilitator, the basis for decision making and a source of power. The form in which information is expressed has created a new challenge in the ability of libraries to preserve, guarantee accessibility and utilization of available resources and services. Electronic resources and services are beginning to take centre stage in library resources and services provision in the developing countries like Nigeria. This has created the problems of personnel capacity development to reposition the library in an ICT age. This is in addition to the computer and ICT literacy skills needed for library clients to take advantage of the opportunities associated with application of Information and communication Technology as an integral part of library resources and services provision. These challenges, if not urgently address, could become sufficient reasons for users' apathy towards library resources and services. The library would have to be well funded to guarantee the provision electronic resources and services as well organise capacity building programme for library staff as required in the new information environment.

It is no longer news that university education in Nigeria is facing a critical challenge in meeting new demands of the 21st Century, with its ever increasing population growth, inadequate library facilities, resources and insufficient funding (Oyewusi and Oyeboada, 2009). Perhaps this explains why users experience dissatisfaction with library resource and services even in libraries that were established forty years ago. A researcher expects positive result in the search for information. The library is approached, by scholars, with high expectation as a research infrastructure capable of meeting the information needs of scholars and researchers. If their information needs are met to a reasonable extent that becomes a good reason for such researcher or scholar to return to the library again and again. If such needs are not met, the feeling of frustration builds up. The importance attached to this unsatisfied need and the urgency the needed information demands could create a very negative impression of the library in the mind of the information seeker. This impression then shapes the attitude of the clients towards the library. The feeling of frustration and lack of confidence in the library's ability to meet their information needs could lead to users' apathy towards library resources and services.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Occupying a magnificent edifice that signified great architectural expression is the university of Calabar library. It started with the physical library system whose collection had shown significant development in the range, quantity and quality of its resources. Recently, an electronic library was commissioned to complement the physical library. The electronic library has significant capacity in terms of number computer systems, internet access and subscription to some major databases. There is a team of technical staff and a back-up power source. At present, scholars and other library users' have free access to the electronic library throughout the working hours of each work day. There are library workers detailed to assist users who are not computer and ICT literate to meet their information needs.

Thus, an ideal library system has been created in the University of Calabar to cater for the needs of the research community and visiting scholars. With this, one would expect to see a busy and adequately patronised library.

However, preliminary observation on the extent of utilization of the university of Calabar library reveals a significantly low level of patronage and poor utilization of available resources and services. Most often, the seats in the Reader Services Units are underutilized and the counters are less busy. Besides, students are seen crowded around the library building with their personal laptops and Smart Phones instead of being in the e-library. It becomes imperative to carry out this study to ascertain the reasons for this state of apathy towards library resources and services in the University of Calabar despite the significant improvement in the range, quantity and quality of resources and services provided by the University of Calabar Library? These are the issues this study sought to address.

Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the extent of utilization of library resources and services by undergraduates in the University of Calabar as a panacea to understanding whether there is a state of apathy towards the use of the library irrespective of the high profile resources and services provided by the library. The specific objectives were:

1. To assess the trend in library use pattern from 2012 to 2015 as an indicator of library patronage by scholars and the research community.
2. To analyse the statistic of registered library users from 2012 to 2015 in order determine the level of patronage of the library.
3. To determine the causes of User apathy towards library resources and services in the University of Calabar library.
4. To ascertain the information and communication technology competences among registered undergraduates library users in the university of Calabar.

Review of Related Literature

A library that is not used is as good as dead, for it cannot justify its existence. It is therefore the use to which the library is put that infuses life into its resources and services; hence, use and user studies cannot outlive their usefulness. Akande (2003) observed that the expectations of people are high when sourcing and retrieving information and when such information needs are not met, frustration usually

set in and this may drive the users away from the library. Akande (2003) further noted that the use of library resources is uppermost in the minds of the university libraries as this will enable the management know how best they can serve their users. Users' study is thus regarded as a veritable tool for the assessment of libraries and their services (Tsafe, 2004). In a study that evaluated the use of library resources and services by students of Paul University, Awka in Anambra State, Nigeria, Nkamnebe, Udem and Nkamnebe (2014) revealed that students rarely use the library for their studies except in the period prior to and during examination. Onifade, Ogbuiyi and Omeluzo (2013) observed that students rarely visit the library and therefore it is often difficult to assess if the library is meeting their needs as the aim of any good library is to satisfy all its users and thereby justify its existence. In a study on library use, Emerole and Ogugua(2007) found that there was relatively low patronage of library resources and services in the Federal University of Technology Owerri. In another study on students' use of library services in The University of Agriculture Markurdi, Amkpa (2000) reported a state of apathy towards the library resources and services.

In a study that assessed library resources management in University of Maiduguri, Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) reported that Nigeria University libraries are not meeting users' expectation. Consequently, most students are not interested in the user education programme put in place and they are not aware of the importance of the library to their academic success. Similarly, Idiedo and Fyneman (2014) found that the quality of library services provided in Niger Delta University, are not satisfactory to users.

The use of electronic information resources in academic libraries is accelerating gradually and the impact on library use is complex, (Kacherki and Thombare, 2010). Ojo and Akande (2005) in a survey of students' access and usage of electronic resources at the University College Ibadan, Nigeria found very low usage. Similarly, Achonna (2008) in a study of students' awareness and utilization of electronic resources in Yaba College of Technology, Nigeria, also found low usage of e-resources and services.

According to Sharma, (2008) the resources in academic libraries are a measure of the institution's excellence and quality. Popoola, (2008) noted that the information resources

available in an ideal academic library should be capable of supporting these research activities among students and faculty members. In a study that investigated the effectiveness of library services from user’s perspective, Hainarayan, Vasantharaju and Swamy, (2008) concluded that college libraries are lagging behind particularly in providing user specific information.

Research Methodology

This study was conducted in the University of Calabar Library, Calabar, Nigeria. Survey research design was used for this study. The population of the study consisted of all the 5,244 registered undergraduate library users between the 2014 and 2015. Accidental sampling technique was used to select 300 respondents who constituted the sample of the study. Questionnaire and direct observation

methods were the instruments used for data collection. The questionnaire was accidentally administered to the respondents in the library and collected on the spot. This was repeated for 6 days and 300 questionnaires were administered. The statistics of library use, books borrowed and records of registered users were assessed and analysed from 2012 to 2015. This was to determine the trend in library use pattern, the level of lending services and progression in the registration of users within the same period. The data generated were analysed using descriptive statistics (simple percentage %).

Presentation of data and Discussion of Findings.

The finding on the library use pattern, based on direct observation, analysis of statistics of library use and books borrowed from 2012 to 2015 is presented in table 1.

Table 1: The statistics of library use and the number of book borrowed in the different units of the Reader’s Services Division of the University of Calabar Library from 2012 to 2015.

Units	Number of visitors.				Total	Number of books borrowed.				Total
	2012	2013	2014	2015		2012	2013	2014	2015	
Humanities Library	19,442	19,008	17,933	17,055	73,438	7,121	7,562	5,991	5,205	25,879
Medical Library	21,825	21,922	18,622	18,134	80,503	9,219	9,874	7,693	7,255	34,041
Science & Tech library	33,777	29,511	27,118	24,598	115,004	11,367	9,842	9,179	8,672	39,060
Social Science Library	24,910	24,278	24,975	11,664	85,827	10,551	9,794	9,003	8,432	37,780
Law Reference Library	11,346	11,734	9,9023	9,731	131,834	-	-	-	-	
Total	111,300	106,453	98,379	81,182	397,314	38,258	37,072	31,866	29,564	136,760
Percentage	28.0	26.8	24.8	20.4	100	28.0	27.1	23.3	21.6	100

The statistics of library use for a period of four years showed that, there was a gradual decline in the level of patronage of the library. The level of usage of library resources and services dropped from 28.0% in 2012 to 26.8 % in 2013, 24.8 % in 2014 and to 20.4 in 2015. The analysis of the books borrowed from the different units of Reader Services Division within the same period also showed remarkable decline from 28.0 % in 2012, to 27.1 % in 2013, 23.3 % in 2014 and 21.6 in 2015. The above analysis clearly showed that there has been a relative decline in the level of patronage as well as the number of books borrowed from the library. This is an indication that there is actually a state of

apathy towards the use of library resources and services in the university of Calabar library. This finding agree with Onifade, Ogbuiyi and Omeluzo (2013) whose study affirmed that students do not maximise the use of library resources provided for them because majority of them do not use the library on a regular basis. At this point, it became necessary to ascertain what could be the reason for this state of apathy in the university of Calabar library.

The finding on the analysis of users’ registration to determine the progression in the registration of library users is presented in table 2.

Table 2: The analysis of the statistics of registered undergraduate users from 2012 to 2015

S/N	Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	Total
1	Undergraduates	3,016	3,452	3,122	2,007	11,597
2	Percentage %	26 %	29.8	26.9 %	17.3 %	81,4%
3	Postgraduates	633	586	677	513	2,409
4	Staff	51	75	44	73	243
5	Visiting scholars	-	3	3	-	6
6	Total	3,700	3,786	4,176	2,593	14,255

The analysis in table two is a reflection of downward progression in users' registration within a period of four years. Undergraduate users' registration rose from 3,016 (26 %) in 2012 to 3,452 (29.8 %) in 2013. This was followed by a downward progression to 3,122 (26.9 %) in 2014 and to 2,007 (17.3 %) in 2015. This analysis is indicative of a gradual lack of interest (apathy) in the library and its resources. With this finding one could aptly say that there is actually a state of apathy towards the University of Calabar library resources and services. This result support that of Nkamnebe, Udem and Nkamnebe (2014), whose findings revealed that utilization of the Library by students on daily basis is low for only 18 (6.5%) of them use the Library on daily basis. The highest number of users' 63 (22.8%) use the Library 3 times in a week, followed by 54 (19.6%) that use the Library once in a week. On the other hand, a significant number 61 (22.1%) hardly use the library, while 19 (6.9%) do not use the Library because they have all the books they need for their studies and laptops that provide them with all information they need for their studies. In the

University of Calabar library, registration of users' is quite fundamental as it determine the level services users can have. For example, only registered library users' have the privilege of borrowing books from the library for a specified period. None registered users' don't have this opportunity. When you consider the high cost of books and other educational materials, it would be absolutely impossible for users to be able to purchase all the information materials they needed to excel in their academic pursuit. This is why they should have registered in the library and enjoys all the available services offered by the library. It is important to note that library registration in the University of Calabar is free. The essence of the registration is to have a database of those recognised as registered users of the library and to know their departments, year of study, residential address, contact information (phone number and e-mail address). These are basic information to guide the library in order to serve users well.

The finding on the causes of apathy towards library resources and services in the University of Calabar is presented in table 3.

Table 3: The causes of users' apathy in the University of Calabar Library as identified by the respondents.

S/N	Items	Respondents	Spercentage
1	Inadequate information resources	33	11
2	Students access to personal computers and Smart phones.	41	13.6
3	Insufficient seats in the library	46	15.3
4	Poor ventilation in the reading areas.	22	7.3
5	Lack of library use education	11	3.7
6	Lack of computer literacy on the part of library users.	15	5
7	Inadequate computers in the electronic library	11	3.7
8	Erratic power supply	42	14
9	Attitude of library staff towards users.	42	14.0
10	Poor reading habits on the part of library users.	11	3.7
11	Users can get their information needs from the Cyber Café	26	8.7
	Total	300	100

The result in table 3 showed the probable reasons for the state of apathy towards the library as identified by the respondents. Insufficient seats was ranked highest with 15.3 % as the most pertinent reason why student are withdrawing from using the library. This is followed by attitude of library staff towards users(14 %), Erratic Power supply (14%), Students access to personal computer and smart phones (13.6), inadequate information resources (11%) among other reasons. This finding agrees with the view expressed by Awana (2006), that the condition of reading chairs, tables and their availability are essential factors to draw or repel users from the library. The seats in the reading areas in the University of Calabar library are fairly adequate. Pressure is brought to bear on the available seats prior to and during examination. This is a confirmation of the finding of Nkamnebe, Udem and Nkamnebe (2014), that students use the library more during examination

period. The offshoot of the information age is manifested in students' ownership of personal laptops and high profile smart phone with which they could use to surf the net. This explains why students are seeing crowding around the library building because of network access since the library and its vicinity is networked.

The issue of epileptic power supply is a real challenge in the University of Calabar library. It is a true reflection of state of electricity supply in Nigeria in general. Although the library has a backup power source, there is always the persistent absence or inadequate diesel to really complement the public power supply. The whole library activities most often are grinded to a halt when power goes off. In the reading areas, you could see students who are eager to read using the torch light in the mobile devices to ensure visibility. The electronic library would automatically run dead in the absence of power supply.

Table 4: ICT competency level among undergraduates in the University of Calabar.

S/N	Items	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Very high	37	12.4
2	High	58	19.3
3	Moderate	35	11.7
4	Low	70	23.3
5	Very low	58	19.3
6	No level of ICT literacy	42	14.0
	Total	300	100

The finding on table 4 showed that the ICT literacy level among undergraduates in the University of Calabar is not so high. There were

respondents who do not have ICT literacy (14.0%), those with moderate ICT literacy (11.7), those with very low ICT literacy (19.3%), those

with low ICT literacy (23.3%), those with high ICT literacy (19.3) and those with very high ICT literacy were 12.4 %. It is interesting to note that there are students with very high ICT literacy (12.4). This group of undergraduate users have good ICT competences that they could use e-resources and services without guidance by library staff. However, there is a worrisome development that 14.0 % of undergraduates lacks basic ICT literacy. For this class of users, electronic resources and services is deemed to be beyond their reach. They will naturally turn away from the e-library. Those with very low ICT literacy skills (19.3) could still see some attraction in the library if there are standby library staff to guide them in the search and retrieval of information.

CONCLUSION

User apathy towards library resources and services is a phenomenon that is capable of shielding users' and potential users' from the good quality resources and services offered by the library. The users' could no longer see anything good or valuable in the library in question. Apart from depriving users of the services offered by the library, user apathy makes the library useless. This is because no matter how rich a library is, in terms of volumes of books, e-resources and services, such a library is meaningless if it is not utilized. In library and information Science practice, utilization of library resources is a major goal and only the attitude and perception of users' could be used to assess the level of utilization the library in question. If the extent of users' apathy towards a library becomes noticeable, then such a library is losing grips of its users and the number users experiencing frustration would continue to increase. In most cases, there are genuine reasons for users' feelings. They may not have any avenue to express such feeling. Some would naturally, and correctly too, refrain from the library to avoid a repeat of their previous experience that has so portrayed the library in bad light. Therefore, academic libraries need to be proactive to guide against the feeling of apathy towards library resources and services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Libraries with perceived incidents alluding to the prevalence of users' apathy would have to resort to awareness and advocacy programmes to woo potential users back to the library. It is important to review the library use

instruction programme, organise outreaches and book exhibitions to create attraction. Staff of the library needed to be properly oriented on the importance of encouraging the library users to the extent that they would be encouraged to come again and again. They are to know that the library is a service oriented entity seeking the satisfaction of its users. The staff should be happy to see users coming into the library. It is also pertinent to appraise available library resources and services with a view to strengthen the weaknesses identified and to consolidate on the areas of strength. The appraisal should be holistic enough to seek users' perception of library resources, library services and library staff attitude towards users. Library users should be given the chance to bear their minds on the current state of reading tables, chairs, ventilation, lighting system and the condition of the rest rooms. Then, Make real and purposeful effort to correct what could have led to the state of apathy towards the library and its resources.

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