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RESEARCH PAPER

LIBRARY UTILIZATION AMONG COLLEGE OF MEDICINE RESEARCH YEAR UNDERGRADUATES: CASE STUDY OF AMBROSE ALLI UNIVERSITY, EKPOMA-NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the prevalence of library utilization by the college of medicine research year undergraduates of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria. It is a descriptive cross sectional survey that involved the use of a pre-tested questionnaire. The results revealed that though the research year undergraduates have library identification cards, they however, did not utilize the library for their research work. Only 8% reported using the library alongside the internet for their research work. Those who did not visit the library in the course of their research work reported using only the internet. The main constraints for not using the library included absence of internet services in college library (100%), lack of up-to-date research journals (91%), difficulties in identifying relevant texts (80%), and restricted access duration (57%). The students were indeed convinced that unlike the college library, the internet was preferable; suggested therefore, the need for libraries to develop ways of satisfying the research need of users especially the students.

Key words: *Library, Utilizations, Research year undergraduates, Nigeria.*

INTRODUCTION

Undergraduates in Nigeria, like in many other countries, rarely visit libraries and information centers (Mary, 2002; Pew Internet and American Life Project, 2002), probably due to the advent of internet (Mallikarjun and Suresh, 2008), online catalogues (Jonathan, 1998), online data-bases (Geer, 2006), new technologies/electronic resources (Brad and Robert, 2000; Deborah and Carl, 2001), new methods of document delivery (Jonathan, 1998), and access to information (Kimberly and Gloria, 2003).

This shift to reliance on online resources alarms many (Fred and Van, 1998; Bonnie, 1998). As a result, the role of the academic library has begun to wane and several authors like Millson-Martula and Menon (1995) and Kimberly and Gloria (2003) have raised several questions such as: has the library become a dinosaur? Do users need a physical library since almost everything can be accessed electronically? Are students still using libraries the way they are supposed to use them? How many students actually still use the library and why?

In fact, many librarians today do not exactly know their users (Patience and Syed, 2001). It is far more difficult to say for certain how many of their students actually visit the physical library and how many of them utilize the services the physical library offers (Jonathan, 1998). Consequently, the range of services and information the academic libraries can provide has dramatically decreased (Daniel and Leigh, 2002).

Nevertheless, it remains a known fact that the academic success of undergraduates is attributable to several variables, one of which is library utilization (Topping and Bremmer, 1998). The academic library has been described as the “heart” of the learning community (Edwards and Brown, 1995), providing a place for undergraduates and faculties to do their research and advance their knowledge (Patience and Syed, 2001; Chatterjee *et al.*, 2006). This indicates that fulfilling user’s needs and regular evaluation of user needs against existing library services and collections is a necessary library management technique for the continuous upgrading of the services provided by the library of any kind (Hernon and Calvert, 1996; Perera, 2005).

Unfortunately, studies focusing specifically on library usage by students are few (Andaleeb and Simmonds, 1998) and according to Wells (1995), the effectiveness of libraries has often been measured by the volume of library materials available to clients, the amount of use of services and resources, and the apparent or quantified satisfaction of clients but none on the level of utilization by the clients. In this regard, Millson-Martula and Menon (1995) maintained that one of the elements of quality service is the incorporation of users’ personal needs and expectations are incorporated into the development of programs and services of libraries.

In Nigeria, few authors have examined and used psychological variables such as social competence, to probe information use among different categories of library users (Andaleeb and Simmonds 1998). Similarly, very little research has taken into account the level of library utilization amongst Nigerian students, as well as the factors influencing their satisfaction (Adetoro, 2011). It is on the basis of this therefore, that this research was designed to determine the level of library utilization amongst research year undergraduate students of Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study Area: This study was carried out at the College of Medicine, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Edo State Nigeria. Ekpoma is the administrative headquarters of Esan West Local Government Area of Edo State, Nigeria. It lies between latitudes 6° 43’ and 6° 45’ North of the Equator and longitudes 6° 6’ and 6° 8’ East of the Greenwich Meridian (Aziegbe, 2006).

Study design: This study adopted the descriptive cross sectional survey method using a pre-tested questionnaire. The research year undergraduates that took part in the pre-study were presented with open-ended questions that allowed them to express their opinions fully. The feedback provided by the participants in the pre-test, enabled the researchers improve on the questions relevant to the study. Questions which were unclear or ambiguous to the respondents were eliminated, and the final version of the questionnaires was administered to 100 research year undergraduate students.

Study population: The study populations were research year undergraduate students; involved in dissertation writing. They comprised a total of one hundred (100) research year undergraduate students of the College of Medicine, Ambrose Alli University, in the following disciplines; Human Physiology (40 students), Medical Laboratory Science (40 students) and Medicine and Surgery 20 students). The sampled students were male and female and in the ratio 1:1 of both sexes.

Ethical Consideration: Informed consent was sort for and granted by all the students involved in the study. They quite understood the basis for the study following detailed explanations.

Exclusion Criteria: Students, who were not research year students and meet the inclusion criteria but choose not to participate, were excluded.

Data collection: Data were collected using a well designed/pre-tested questionnaire.

Data Analysis: The data was analyzed, using SPSS software package version 17.0. The Mean ± standard deviation values were calculated. The Students t- test method was employed for comparison, while p-value ≤ 0.05 was considered statistically significant at 95% confidence level.

RESULTS

Form the study it was observed that all research year undergraduates of the college of medicine had library identification cards. However, majority (47%) reported irregular library visits before their research year, while 9%

claim to have visited the library four times or more in a week. Interestingly, their library visitation increase in their research year with only 19% reporting irregular visits, 22% however, reported once a week visits while 59% reported visiting the library 2 to 4 times or more per week. When the research year undergraduates were asked where they got most of their project resource materials, only 8% used the college library while, 88% used the internet. Only 21% of the respondent claimed college library impacted on their research works to some degree while others reported no impact (See table 1).

Comparatively, it was observed that a greater percentage of the students in medicine and surgery utilized the library more than the student of the other departments both before their research year (100.0%) and during their research year (55.0%). Undergraduates of the department of Human physiology were less likely to utilize the library either before research year (32.5%) or during research year (17.5%) (See table 2).

Reasons for non utilization of the college library by research year undergraduates include the absence of internet services (100%), lack of current journal (91%), difficulties in identifying relevant texts for research (80.0%), limited time for library access (57%) and Lack of comfort in the library due to deplorable facilities (43%). Worryingly, 52% of the undergraduates reported the unfriendly nature of library staff as their reason for non utilization of the library (see table 2). According to the students, internet can be visited at any time of the day and this makes it preferable than the college library. One reason most respondents gave for internet preference was the fact that they need not take permission before accessing the internet at will unlike the college library (see table 3).

Table 1: Undergraduates use of library for project writing

Library utilization questions	Variable	Number/percentage
Do you have a Library ID?	Yes	100
	No	0
How often do you use the library before your research year?	Never	0
	Not regular	47
	Once a week	22
	2-3 times a week	22
	4times + a week	9
How often do you use the library at your present year?	Never	0
	Not regular	19
	Once a week	22
	2-3 times a week	38
	4times + a week	21
Where did you get most of your resource materials?	Library articles/text	8
	Online article/text	88
	Personnel textbooks	4
How has college library impacted on your research writing?	Not at all	79
	Minimally	10
	Fairly	7
	Highly	4

Table 1: Undergraduates use of library by department for project writing

Use of library	Departments	Yes	No	% utilization
Library utilization by department before research year	HP	18	22	32.50
	MLS	21	19	52.50
	MD	20	0	100.00
Library resources utilization for research work by department	HP	7	33	17.50
	MLS	10	30	25.00
	MD	11	9	55.00

DISCUSSION

The library is known to be a place entrusted with the acquisition, organization, preservation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information in whatever format (Olanlokun and Salisu, 1993). In line with this, Olanlokun (1982)

reported that the library is useful for class work, research, discussions, leisure, and other purposes. To support this, Williams (1995) surveyed Canadian undergraduates and found that active learners who participate more in class and who read, write and study more, are regular and active library users. These professed functions of the library however, do not reflect in the response and utilization pattern of College students under study.

Table 3: Reason for non utilization of the library by research year undergraduates

Reasons	Strongly agree	Agreed	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No response
Lack of recent materials and textbooks	89	2	-	-	9
Lack of identifying relevant texts for research	80	-	2	1	7
Lack of time compliance	52	5	19	22	2
Absent of internet	92	8	-	-	-
Lack of supportive and conducive comfort in the library due to deplorable accessories	31	12	24	21	12
Unfriendly nature of library staff	11	41	21	36	1

Specifically, the findings of this study indicate that majority of the College research year undergraduates, do not rely on or utilize the college library during their research year (72%) and reported no impact of the college library to their write up (79%). However, their attitude towards library utilization varied according to the discipline (see table 1 and 2) and this is in line with the report from a study conducted among undergraduates of the University of Uyo, Nigeria (Omehia et al., 2008). Even Whitemire (2001), contends that changes in user patterns have implications for university library services.

It is important to acknowledge the fact that many studies on academic use of the library have been conducted. Fowowe (1989) had previously found differences in the frequency of library use by faculty and students, and stated that 94.8% of students use library facilities; although the later contradicts the finding of this study. Even the findings by Isah (2010) on academic staff of the University of Ilorin indicated that there is 30% level of patronage, and 63.3% occasionally visits the e-library centre to access electronic resources. Could it be therefore, that it is in our nature (Nigerians) to under utilize the library? Moreover, reading or studying in our clime has become a declining culture.

Guskin (1996) had emphasized the use of library to promote active learning as it contributes to students' ability to think critically and work well independently and in a group. A study by Alam-Bukhari et al. (2013), to investigate the use of library by master's student of University College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Rawalpindi, revealed that 57% stated that the library was not providing a learning environment for them and this was the main reason that kept them away from the library. Of course, this was also one of the reasons for the non utilization of the library by research year undergraduates under study.

Recall that all of the research year undergraduates reported to have utilized the library before their research year. The question now is: 'what then is the cause for the non-utilization of the library during their research year when they are supposed to be more regular? Could Ajayi (1993) be right in when he stated that "students who do not appreciate the value of the library are at a disadvantage, and may visit the library only to read for examinations"? Unomah (1996) found that faculties can be implicated in students' use of the library or otherwise.

Considering the reasons for the non utilization of the library by the College research year undergraduates (see table 3), there is this assertion that the college library may experience an unacceptable level of library utilization if solution to the main problems are not provided as soon as possible. To this effect, the college library must incorporate modern information technologies (IT) to retain its relevance in this era of IT revolution.

Based on the findings of this study therefore, it is recommended that libraries facing these challenges should develop strategies to encourage students to utilize the library. These strategies should include the provision of current textbooks, journal publications, thesis collections, and more student friendly services. The provision of these services can be achieved in collaboration with international bodies, as well as local and international publishers. However, the role of the university management in this regard cannot be over emphasized.

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AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION

Mrs Momodu O.M. is the researcher and conducted this study.