

Timely Provision of Quality Services Delivery Among Library Personnel in Selected Universities in Southwestern, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated timely provision of quality services delivery by library personnel in selected universities in Southwestern Nigeria. Academic librarians, library officers and library assistants constitute the population for the study. The study covered 12 selected Nigerian university libraries and questionnaire was used for the data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Findings from the study revealed that acquisition, cataloguing and classification, selective dissemination of information and inter library loan, reference service, information literacy skills training services and reprographic services were the major types of services rendered by library personnel in the selected universities in Southwestern Nigeria. Major challenges constraining service delivery include, poor attitude towards to users', unwillingness to assisting users, lack of required knowledge and skills to handle users' service effectively, unavailability of e-resources, lack of necessary library modern equipment and inability to access library materials among others. The study recommended provision of timely, quality and satisfactory services as well as library resources by library personnel. Library management should make library environment comfortable and inviting to the users.

Keywords: *Timely provision, Quality library services, Library personnel, University libraries, Southwestern Nigeria*

Introduction

Library users and researchers are expecting timely provision and quality services from library personnel. Timely provision and quality services should be library top priority, hence library collections and e-resources materials should be made available to users whenever there is a need for them. Adequate attention should be given to researchers and students to complete their studies. When enough attention is given to library users, there is tendency for them to always want to use the library for their assignments. A library should be able to; answer users' questions, willing to help users, handle users' services and provide comfortable and inviting environment for users. A service means an act offered by one group to another. Whereas in the form of economy, a service is an economic activity that generates value and provides benefits to customers within a specific time and place. However, customer expectations about service delivery vary from person to person, product to product, service to service, culture to culture, business to business, industry to industry, and country to country' (Fogli, 2006).

The ability to deliver timely quality service is an essential for progress to success (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 2012). Chia, Chin, and Chin, (2002) defined service quality as a comparison between customer expectation and their perception of the service they actually received. Academic libraries are supposed to be proactive in delivering service to the library users (OECD, 2001). Besides that, academic libraries are also under pressure to increase efficiency and respond to their institutions' legislation (Robinson, 2003). In academic libraries, quality should be defined as a result that satisfies the needs of library users, who are the customers of the library (Hamid, 1991). In academic libraries, service delivery involves provision of services which are fast, of good quality and satisfy the library users (Ingraham, 2005).

There are many students who are not interested in using the library because, they can access resources through their hand phones. But some of them that are interested should be given individual attention to promote the library operations and services. Most users want timely and quality services and if these are lacking, they stop coming to the library. Library personnel should, therefore, be able to assist and answer users' questions and effectively provide library resources to them in a comfortable and inviting environment.

Literature Review

To measure service quality, the most well known model is SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988) which consists of five aspects including: reliability, which involves the ability to provide the service promised accurately and as expected; responsiveness which focuses on the willingness to render an appropriate service to help customers overcome their problem; warranty, which deals with using workers knowledge and politeness/courtesy and their ability to build trust and confidence; empathy, which deals with service provider's attitude towards understanding each and every customer based on their problem; and tangibles, which include physical evidence concerning the service provided or whatever appearance that can be seen, touched and tasted. Although SERVQUAL is widely received among academics, there is no universal model that caters for all the different contexts and situations in which service quality operates (Cronin and Taylor, 1992).

Hernon and Nitecki (2001) noted that service quality definitions vary across the literature and are based on four underlying perspectives. Excellence, which is often externally defined; Value, which incorporates multiple attributes and is focused on benefit to the recipient; Conformance to specifications which enables precise measurement but which the customers may not know or care about internal specifications; Meeting or exceeding expectations, which is all-encompassing and applies to all service industries. Most marketing and library science researchers, however, have focused on the fourth perspective (Hernon and Nitecki, 2001), and the Gaps Model of Service Quality uses that perspective as a framework to identify the gaps created when performance either exceeds or falls short of meeting customer expectations.

In the Gaps Model, customer expectations are viewed as subjective and based on the extent to which customers believe a particular attribute is essential for an excellent service provider. Customer perceptions are judgments about service performance. Furthermore, expectations are not viewed as static as they are expected to change and evolve over time. Hernon (2002) wrote that the confirmation/disconfirmation process, which influences the Gaps Model, suggests that expectations provide a frame of reference against which customers' experiences can be measured customers from their expectations prior to purchasing or using a product or service. These expectations become a basis against which to compare actual performance.

The measurement of service quality using the Gaps Model, therefore, focuses on the interaction between customers and service providers and the difference, or gap, between expectations about service provision and perceptions about how the service was actually provided (Parasuraman et al., 1988). The difference between the minimum acceptable and the perceived levels of service is the adequacy gap such that larger adequacy gaps indicate better performance. The difference between the desired and perceived levels of service is the superiority gap; ideally, these scores would be identical so a perfect score is zero. As the superiority gap score gets further from zero, either positive or negative, it indicates poorer performance.

LibQUAL+™ was —initiated in 2000 as an experimental project for benchmarking perceptions of library service quality across 13 libraries (Kyrillidou, 2006). During 2006 the LibQUAL+™ survey was administered in 298 institutions. This study analysed data collected from the two administrations of LibQUAL+™ during 2006. A description of the instrument will facilitate an

understanding of the investigation. With each administration, the LibQUAL+™ instrument was improved and it is currently composed of 22 questions and as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

LibQUAL+™ Dimensions and their Component Items	Dimension	Components
Service Affect	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Employees who instill confidence in users 2. Giving users individual attention 3. Employees who are consistently courteous 4. Readiness to respond to users' questions 5. Employees who have the knowledge to answer user questions 6. Employees who deal with users in a caring fashion 7. Employees who understand the needs of their users 8. Willingness to help users 9. Dependability in handling users' service problems 	
Information Control	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Making electronic resources accessible from my home or office 2. A library Web site enabling me to locate information on my own 3. The printed library materials I need for my work 4. The electronic information resources I need 5. Modern equipment that lets me easily access needed information 6. Easy-to-use access tools that allow me to find things on my own 7. Making information easily accessible for independent use 8. Print and/or electronic journal collections I require for my work 	
Library as Place	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Library space that inspires study and learning 2. Quiet space for individual activities 3. A comfortable and inviting location 4. A getaway for study, learning or research 5. Community space for group learning and group study 	

The three dimensions measured by LibQUAL+™ are service affect, information control, and library as place. The perceptions of customers about library staff competency and helpfulness are derived from nine questions that compose the service affect dimension score. The information control dimension is derived from eight questions and focuses on whether the library's collections are adequate to meet customer needs and whether the collections are organized in a manner that enables self-reliance for library users. Finally, the library as place dimension is derived from five questions that address user perceptions regarding the facility functionality and adequacy for academic activities. All of the scores are scaled from 1 to 9 with 9 being the highest rating, so that scores can be compared (Thompson, Cook, and Kyrillidou, 2006).

The question faced by top library personnel is whether external measurement value creation or library users' satisfaction can be upgraded by quality of service increases (Kelly, 2005). Library users' satisfaction is a belief in the service delivery that functions as a standard or reference point where service delivery is evaluated (Zeitham and Bitner, 2003). The dilemma faced by top librarians is to choose between service accountability through performance measurement and

democratic accountability through feedback votes (Kelly, 2005). Library knowledge which university library personnel could use to improve their service delivery quality include resources identified by Popoola and Haliso (2009) as those information bearing materials that are in both printed and electronic formats, for instance, textbooks, journals, indexes, abstracts, newspapers and magazines, reports, CDROM databases, Internet/E-mail, videotapes/cassettes, diskettes, magnetic disk, computers, microforms, etc.

Libraries in research universities, unlike their counterparts in primarily undergraduate institutions, are intended to support significant graduate programs and research activity. In such libraries students and faculty will find rich, well-organized collections. In contrast, libraries that support solely undergraduate work have collections that support the curriculum but are not likely to have the resources required to support faculty research. Adequate attention should be given to users and willingly ready to assist users. While providing timely service, users should be handled effectively by attending to their request promptly.

Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. identify the types of services rendered in the selected university libraries in Southwestern Nigeria
2. ascertain the level of service delivery by library personnel in the selected universities in Southwestern Nigeria and
3. establish the constraints to service delivery among library personnel in selected universities in Southwestern Nigeria.

Research questions

The following research questions of the study are:

1. What types of services are rendered in the selected university libraries in Southwestern Nigeria?
2. What is the level of service delivery by library personnel in the selected universities in Southwestern Nigeria?
3. What are the constraints to service delivery by library personnel in selected universities in Southwest, Nigeria?

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was survey design. A total of 427 library personnel (academic librarians, library officers and library assistants) spread across 12 selected university libraries constitute the sample size for this study. Questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three sections; types of services that are been rendered in the selected university libraries in Southwestern Nigeria, level of service delivery among library personnel in the selected universities libraries in Southwestern, Nigeria, and constraints to service delivery among library personnel in selected universities libraries in Southwestern Nigeria. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

Interpretation of Results and Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Types of services rendered in the selected universities libraries in Southwestern Nigeria

s/n	Variable	SD	D	A	SA	x	Rank
1	Acquisition	13 3.0%	14 3.3%	44 10.3%	356 83.4%	3.74	1st
2	Cataloguing and Classification	12 2.8%	22 5.2%	69 16.2%	324 75.9%	3.65	2nd
3	Selective dissemination of information	16 3.7%	22 5.2%	60 14.1%	329 77.0%	3.64	3rd
4	Inter library loan	20 4.7%	19 4.4%	71 16.6%	317 74.2%	3.60	4th
5	Information literacy skills training	13 3.0%	26 6.1%	84 17.9%	304 71.2%	3.59	5th
6	Internet/electronic service	16 3.7%	38 8.9%	74 17.3%	299 70.0%	3.54	6th
7	Current awareness Service	17 4.0%	33 7.7%	97 22.7%	280 65.6%	3.50	7th
8	Reprographic service	25 5.9%	33 7.7%	89 20.8%	280 65.6%	3.46	8th
9	Indexing and abstracting	28 6.6%	32 7.5%	99 23.2%	268 62.8%	3.42	9th
10	Circulation	38 8.9%	53 12.4%	76 17.8%	76 17.8%	3.31	10th
11	Referencing	40 9.4%	51 11.9%	84 19.7%	252 59.0%	3.28	11th
Weighted mean = 3.52							

Table 1 presents the result of services rendered by university libraries in Southwestern Nigeria. The results ranked “Acquisition” (x = 3.74), “Cataloguing and Classification” (x = 3.65), “Selective dissemination of information” (x = 3.64), Inter library loan (x = 3.60), Information literacy skills training (x = 3.59), and Internet/electronic service (x = 3.54) as topping the list of services being rendered by the selected university libraries in Southwestern Nigeria.

Table 2: Level of service delivery among library personnel in the selected university libraries in Southwest, Nigeria.

s/n	Variable	1	2	3	4	\bar{x}	Rank
1	The library renders selective dissemination of information service	6 1.4%	6 1.4%	60 14.1%	355 83.1%	3.79	1st
2	The library renders acquisition services	5 1.2%	15 3.5%	46 10.8%	361 84.5%	3.79	2nd
3	The library renders inter library loan services	5 1.2%	21 4.9%	74 17.3%	327 76.6%	3.69	3rd
4	The library renders cataloguing and classification service	12 2.8%	18 4.2%	64 15.0%	333 78.0%	3.68	4th
5	Reference service is highly important in the library	14 3.3%	22 5.2%	66 15.5%	325 76.1%	3.64	5th
6	The library renders information literacy skills training services	10 2.3%	26 6.1%	70 16.4%	321 75.2%	3.64	5th
7	The library renders reprographic service	11 2.6%	39 9.1%	68 15.9%	309 72.4%	3.58	7th
8	Current awareness services is important in the library	21 4.9%	33 7.7%	74 17.3%	299 70.0%	3.52	8th
9	Loan service is crucial in the library	35 8.2%	33 7.7%	67 15.7%	292 68.4%	3.44	9th
10	The library renders internet/electronic services	35 8.2%	32 7.5%	73 17.1%	287 67.2%	3.43	10th
11	The library renders abstracting and indexing services	37 8.7%	97 22.7%	126 29.5%	167 39.1%	2.99	11th
Weighted mean = 3.56							

Table 2 shows the level of service delivery among library personnel in selected universities libraries in Southwest, Nigeria. “The library renders selective dissemination of information service” was ranked highest by the mean score rating ($\bar{x}=3.79$) and was followed in succession by “The library renders acquisition services” ($\bar{x}=3.79$), “The library renders inter library loan services” ($\bar{x}=3.69$), “The library renders cataloguing and classification service in my library” ($\bar{x}=3.68$), “Reference service is highly important in my library” ($\bar{x}=3.64$) among others.

Table 3: The constraints to service delivery among library personnel in selected universities libraries in Southwest, Nigeria.

s/n	Variable	SD (%)	D (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	̄	RANK
1	Not attending to user' requests	9.2%	36	213	169	3.27	1st
			8.4%	49.9%	39.6%		
2	Unwillingly to assisting users	15	52	187	173	3.21	2nd
		3.5%	12.2%	43.8%	40.5%		
3	Failure to handle users' service effectively	12	46	25	144	3.17	3rd
		2.8%	10.8%	52.7%	33.7%		
4	Unavailability of e-resources	14	59	194	160	3.17	4th
		3.3%	13.8%	45.4%	37.5%		
5	Lack of necessary library modern equipment	10	64	215	139	3.13	5th
		2.3%	15.0%	50.4%	32.3%		
6	Not able to access library materials	16	49	230	132	3.12	6th
		3.7%	11.5%	53.9%	30.9%		
7	Lack of adequate reading rooms	20	57	201	149	3.12	6th
		4.7%	13.3%	47.1%	34.9%		
8	Not giving individual attention	16	64	206	141	3.11	8th
		3.7%	15.0%	48.2%	33.0%		
9	Library website not accessible	21	68	191	147	3.09	9th
		4.9%	15.9%	44.7%	34.4%		
10	Lack of comfortable and inviting environment	17	63	214	133	3.08	10th
		4.0%	14.8%	50.1%	31.1%		

Table 3 shows the constraints to service delivery among library personnel in selected universities libraries in Southwest, Nigeria. "Not attending to users' requests ranked highest by the mean scores (\bar{x} =3.27) rating is the top challenges to service delivery which was followed in succession by "Unwillingly to assisting users" (\bar{x} =3.21), "Failure to handle users' service effectively" (\bar{x} =3.17), "Unavailability of e-resources" (\bar{x} =3.17), "Lack of necessary modern library equipment" (\bar{x} =3.13) respectively.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of this study show the types of services rendered in the selected university libraries in Southwest Nigeria. The study, therefore, revealed that acquisition, cataloguing and classification, selective dissemination of information and inter library loan were the major types of services rendered among library personnel in the selected universities in Southwest, Nigeria. Using 3.52 as benchmark, the inference drawn from this was that the first service rendered by the library personnel in the selected university libraries is acquisition of library materials follow by cataloguing and classification. This is so since cataloguing and classification of library materials cannot be done except, they are first acquired.

The study shows that the level of service delivery among library personnel in selected universities in Southwest, Nigeria. The study, therefore, revealed that majority of the respondents indicated that their library renders; selective dissemination of information service, acquisition services, inter library loan services, cataloguing and classification services, reference Service is highly important in my library, information literacy skills training services and reprographic services. Hence, using 3.56 as benchmark, there is high level of dissemination of information service among library

personnel in selected university libraries in Southwest, Nigeria. This is because different library patron requires different information based on their area of specialisation.

The study reveals the following constraints mitigating against service delivery among library personnel in selected universities in Southwest, Nigeria.; not attending to users' requests, unwillingly to assisting users, failure to handle users' service effectively, unavailability of eresources, lack of necessary library modern equipment, not able to access library materials, lack of adequate reading rooms, not giving individual intention, library website not accessible and finally, lack of comfortable and inviting environment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Timely provision of quality and satisfactory services for library users by the library personnel should be enhanced. Library users and researchers should be encouraged to use library for their research activities. Library collections and e-resources materials must be made available to users timely. Quality services should be promoted to library users and researchers. This will encourage students and researchers to make use of the library for assignments and other academic activities during the course of their studies.

The following recommendations were provided:

1. Timely, quality and satisfactory services should be provided to the library users.
2. Library personnel should be willingly to assist and help users in accessing library resources.
3. Library personnel should be exposed to modern training and workshop, where new trend on effective service delivery is provided.
4. Library management should be able to make library environment comfortable and inviting to the users and researchers.

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