

# AN EVALUATE STUDY OF HEZEKIAH OLUWASANMI LIBRARY COLLECTIONS, OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE, NIGERIA

T.O. Adewale, and J.O. Ajileye-Laogun\*

## **ABSTRACT**

*This study was conducted to investigate the awareness and usage of Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection by the students of Obafemi Awolowo University in Ile-Ife, Nigeria. A questionnaire was used for data collection from the students in six out of the eleven faculties of the university. The study showed that the awareness of the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection and its information services at various units of the library were provided for the students, and the usage of the information materials was high among the students of faculties of Pharmacy, Law and Education. It was found that the rate of awareness of the library collection and its information services provided was low in the faculties of Science, Health Science and Technology. The majority of the students from these three faculties did not use the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection because either the materials were not relevant to their learning and research for the materials and the services provided by the collection. Factors affecting awareness and use of library collections such as competence in library-use skills; inadequate user education and attitudes towards users by library staff were reviewed. A comprehensive range of recommendations to improve user awareness including a well structured library orientation programme, provision of faculty libraries and automation of library functions were also presented in the study.*

## **Introduction**

### **Brief History Of Obafemi Awolowo Univeristy (O. A. U.)**

The Obafemi Awolowo University began as a University of Ife, established by a Bill passed at the Western Regional House of Assembly at Ibadan, Nigeria on 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1961, legally bringing into existence a university to be owned by the Region and to be sited at Ile-Ife, the accredited cradle of Yoruba civilization. It was officially opened in September 1962 with a nucleus of 190 foundation students and a team of 64 academic staff, all committed to building a virile academic community.

\* T.O. Adewale, and J.O. Ajileye-Laogun are library staff at Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria.

By then, academic programmes had been established in five faculties; Agriculture, Arts, Science, Social Science and Law as well as in one research institute, the Institute of African Students. With these, it was possible for the University of Ife to commence proper university teaching programmes in October 1962 though not at Ile-Ife but at Ibadan where it was destined to stay for the subsequent four years. The university had to be accommodated temporarily on the campus of the Old Nigerian College of Arts, Science and Technology at Ibadan. Apart from being the seat of the premier university, Ibadan was probably the only city in Western Region with facilities for an institution of such international standard.

With the inauguration of a governing council and the installation of a new vice chancellor on 1<sup>st</sup> of March, 1966, the University of Ife was set to begin a spectacular phase that lasted till 1975. It was the era of consolidation of the University. This was because the Federal Government was funding University education adequately during that period and in addition to this, the incumbent Vice Chancellor then was very committed to the all-round development of the University at the early stage. In fact, the housing scheme of the University with unique architectural designs which is still the best in Africa, established during that period, are still evidences of the efficiency of that administration. The signposts of the era were in various areas including the move from temporary campus in Ibadan to the permanent site at Ile-Ife in 1967; physical expansion which included development of post graduate studies, staff training and Nigerianisation, expansion of student enrolment, the development of research activities and expansion of the services of the library.

The years 1975 – 1987 were a period of transition to a Federal University status. In August 1975, the University was taken over by the then Federal Military Government. The Governing Council was dissolved and a provisional council was constituted in its place. Part of the provisions of Decree 23 which effected the take over was the vesting of the power to the head of the federal government who became visitor to the governor of the then Western State.

The name of the institution was then changed in May 1987 from University of Ife to Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife after the demise of the elder statesman to immortalize his name and show appreciation for his contribution as one of the founding fathers of the University.

### **The University Library System**

The University Library System comprises a central library with two main buildings of North and South wings.

The library system began with the setting up of the central library in 1968 with a nucleus of 40,000 volumes made up of 30,000 books and 10,000 periodicals transferred from the temporary site at Ibadan to the University of

Ife, Ile-Ife that year. In the first seven years of its existence, the library was housed in a temporary cramped quarters which were ill-equipped for the requirement of a university library.

Earlier in 1968, in an amendment to the Western State Publication Law, the State government had named the University of Ife Library as a legal depository of two copies of all works published in the then Western State of Nigeria.

According to Omosini and Adediran (1988); by 1972, the library contained 60,000 bound volumes and was subscribing to 27,000 serial publications. A particular important feature of the library acquisition in that year was its Africana Collection. Also, a special attention was paid to research needs of the academic community as reflected through the expansions of the range of Abstracts and Indexes and partly through the acquisition of primary source materials both from within and outside Nigeria. The number of librarians increased from three (3) to seventeen (17) and the number of volumes reached 135,000 by the end of 1973/74 academic session.

On its completion of the South Wing in 1989, the library was capable of accommodating 250,000 volumes and to seat about 800 readers. The North Wing extension with a capacity for 500,000 volumes and about 1,500 seats was commissioned in 1983.

It is also worth mentioning at this juncture that the library was on 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1980 named after Professor Hezekiah Oluwasanmi who was the Vice-Chancellor of the university (1966 – 1975) that was regarded as the era of consolidation because the university witnessed a great development in all ramifications and that of the library reached the climax during the period.

The Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library of the Obafemi Awolowo University has the goal and target of acquiring, processing, storing, retrieving and disseminating of valuable materials to support the teaching, learning and research needs of staff, students and researchers of the university community. The services offered at the library included reference services, lending materials to users, reprography, building and preservation of reading materials.

### **Factors affecting Awareness and Use of Library Collections**

“To be aware of” means to have knowledge, or an idea of something, somebody, an event, a place, or information that one needs. In the librarians’ parlance, it refers to having knowledge of the facilities and services offered at the library. Awareness and use of the library’s collection thus indicate user’s knowledge of the availability of these collections and the use they make of them.

Boakye (1999) identified a number of factors that affect the awareness and use of the collections; some of these are:

1. Competence in library-use skills
2. User education
3. Attitude of library staff to users.

### **Competence in Library-Use Skills**

The catalogue can be referred to as the key to the library stock. Boakye (1999) emphasized that for users to be aware and make effective use of resources, they must be competent in library-use skills, one of which is the ability to use the library catalogue to search for information.

Harrison and Beenham (1985) summing up the functions of the library catalogue noted that:

It guides the reader to the location of

- (a) books on a particular subject
- (b) books by a particular author
- (c) a particular book where only the title is known
- (d) books on related subjects.

This is done by providing catalogue entries under subjects, authors, titles, etc and by providing references. The location of each one depends on the class number indicated on the catalogue entry.

They further noted that the catalogue acts as a guide to individual books by showing on catalogue entries.

- (a) descriptive information: edition, place of publication, publisher, date;
- (b) bibliographical information: number of pages, whether illustrated, etc.
- (c) other special features which are mentioned by annotation.

Therefore, users are handicapped in the use of the library if they lack the skill to use the catalogue. They are thus unaware of a number of books and journals which would have helped them greatly in their search for information.

A survey at the University of Cape Town Library conducted by Jager (1991) before the introduction of an online catalogue, to find out to what extent they use the existing catalogues, established that a large number of the students come to the library to study and do their own work rather than use the resources of the library because it was a problem for them to use the library's catalogues to retrieve information.

### **User Education**

To acquire library-use skills, users must be given user education. Boakye (1999) explained that this involves organization of library instruction and orientation programmes for the users, especially freshmen to academic institutions like the universities and polytechnics. This is because user education stimulates users' awareness of the library's resources and services.

Herring (1986) claimed that user education has four aims:

- to enhance student learning,
- to encourage user independence
- to widen the use of a range of library resources and to introduce the library and its staff to its users.

In order for the instruction and orientation programmes to be successful, Boakye (1999) suggest that they should be organized at different levels for the students at timely intervals and must be continually monitored and evaluated. If the programme is not properly organized, it is unlikely to achieve its aim of helping the user to be competent in library-use skills.

### **Attitude of Library Staff to Users**

The patronage of the library, to a great extent, depends on the library staffs' attitude towards the users. Friendly and helpful library staff encourage users into the library while unfriendly and lazy staff drive them away. The personality of the information manager (the librarian) counts very much in attracting users to the information centre. He should be friendly, outgoing with a sense of humour, coupled with obvious expertise and intelligence, the user will be convinced that there is an approachable and reliable information expert in that library. The library staff with such qualifications and a good attitude to work will attract users to the library. Whilst in the library, they will at least browse through the books or be attracted by a bright and conspicuous label on a shelf which may stock some materials useful to users. In this way, users will become aware of the availability of materials relevant to their studies and research. Thus, usefulness of the collections increases.

### **Objectives of the study**

The study was undertaken with the following objectives:

- to find out the available collections of Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library
- to find our users' awareness of the resources
- to find our the extent of the use of the resources
- to make recommendations to improve upon the awareness and use of the library collections where necessary.

### **Methodology**

This study was designed to cover a representative sample of students from the Faculties of Education, Law, Health Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Pharmacy and Science at the time, the study was carried out in

2003/2004 academic year. There were eleven faculties in the university out of which approximately half were selected (6) for the study. In order to obtain a representative sample of the whole students population in each faculty, a random sampling technique was used.

Questionnaires tagged "Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library Evaluation" were distributed to 240 students, but 228 (95%) of them completed and returned them. The questionnaires were distributed through individual lecturers to students in their respective classes. Also, copies of the questionnaire were distributed through fellow students in the same programme as the sampled students. (A careful study of the records and available collections in each of the sections named in the questionnaire was done). The heads of each section of the library mentioned in the questionnaire were also interviewed.

### **Problems hindering Awareness and Use of the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Collections**

Students were asked to identify problems that hinder their awareness and use of the library collections.

Below is a summary of the problems noted.

#### **1. Poor Lighting System**

Frequent power cuts at the university which affects work in the libraries and use of the collections by users was complained about. It is quite unpleasant when in the course of reading, the light goes off making reading difficult. A standby electricity generator and transformer have been provided which now supplies electricity light when there is a power cut. The library is closed down because of power failure only when there is acute shortage of fuel for the generator in the town.

#### **2. Location of the Library**

Some respondents were not happy about the distant location of the library to their faculties. Students, especially in the faculties of pharmacy and health sciences complained that their faculties are too far to the library and advocated for faculty library.

#### **3. Unfriendly Staff**

Some respondents were not happy with the attitude of some library staff which they considered not friendly enough, which made it difficult for them (users) to ask for help. Others however commended some staffs they found very helpful and friendly in their search for information.

#### 4. Difficulty in Using the Catalogues

A major problem touched on by users is the difficulty they faced in using the library's catalogues in their search for information especially in recent years. This is because the shelves are now well caged with only the library staff inside them. Students are not allowed to go inside the cage shelves to browse or look for books themselves. This is because the library now operates a close access system deviating from the open access system of the past. Close access system was embarked on because massive mutilation of books, stealing, disorganization of the shelves were reported and this has hindered easy and quick retrieval of materials.

#### 5. Inadequate Current Materials

Some respondents complained about the fact that some books and journals are not current and that the current ones are inadequate. Moreover, some users complained that there should be a means through which the library could make users aware of their new collections in the faculties. This could be attributed to the general inadequacy of fund for the libraries to acquire materials.

#### Research findings

##### (i) Awareness of the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library Collection and its information services

Awareness of the existence of collection and the services offered is crucial for students to consult the materials. Respondents were asked whether they were aware of the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection and its information services, as well as whether they consulted the collection for their information needs.

The majority (73.2%) of the respondents stated that they were aware of Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection.

Table 1  
Percentage Distribution of Respondents by Faculty and Gender  
(Total Respondents = 228)

Faculty	Total	Males	Females
Health	37	22(59.5%)	15(40.5%)
Engineering & Tech.	40	23(57.5%)	17(42.5%)
Education	38	16(42.1%)	22(57.9%)
Law	40	7(17.5%)	33(82.5%)
Pharmacy	40	20(50.0%)	20(50.0%)
Science	33	17(51.5%)	16(48.5%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>123</b>

**Table 2A**  
**Student Awareness of Hezekiah**  
**Oluwasanmi Library Collection**  
**(Number of Respondents = 167)**

Faculty	Awareness of H. O. Library Collection	Percentage
Health Sciences	26	65.0
Engineering & Tech.	26	65.0
Education	29	70.3
Law	30	75.0
Pharmacy	35	87.5
Science	21	63.6
Total	167	73.2

On the issue of awareness of types of information services provided by the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection, 72.8% of the respondents were aware of information services at the Reference Desk; 35.9% were also aware of information at the Circulation Desk while 27.6% of the respondents were aware of information at the Africana Section; 30.7% were aware of information at the Document Section while 53.3% and 22.8% were aware of information services at Reserve and Serial Sections respectively. (see table 2B).

The study has shown that the students were not so aware of the Serial Section because, they are undergraduates. Their research work can be done without additional information from journals; they prefer consulting books than journals in the library.

**Table 2B**  
**Students Awareness of types of information Services**  
**(Number of Respondents = 228)**

Faculty	Ref. Desk	Circulation Desk	Africana Section	Document Section	Reserve Section	Serial Section
Health Sciences	22(55.5%)	11(29.7%)	5(13.5%)	9(24.3%)	18(48.6%)	5(13.5%)
Engineering & Technology	29(72.5%)	14(35.0%)	5(12.5%)	13(32.5%)	25(62.5%)	11(27.5%)
Education	29(76.3%)	18(47.4%)	18(47.4%)	16(42.1%)	17(44.7%)	13(34.2%)
Law	30(75.0%)	9(22.5%)	16(40.0%)	12(30.0%)	9(22.5%)	7(17.5%)
Pharmacy	32(80.0%)	19(47.5%)	11(27.5%)	9(22.5%)	33(82.5%)	12(30.0%)
Science	24(72.7%)	11(33.3%)	8(24.2%)	11(33.3%)	19(57.6%)	4(12.1%)
Total	166(72.8%)	82(35.9%)	63(27.6%)	70(30.7%)	121(53.0%)	52(22.8%)



### (ii) Students' Reasons for using the Collection

When respondents were asked why they used the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection, a variety of reasons were given. It was found out that a large percentage (68.8%) of students used the collection for assignment purposes. While (34.2%) used the collection for research purposes. Only 41.2% of the respondents used materials in the Library collection for general knowledge. The survey showed that except for the Faculty of Health Science, the percentage of students who used the materials for assignment purposes was high in all the faculties. Therefore, the majority of students used Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection materials mainly for assignment purposes.

**Table 3**

**Reasons for use of material  
(Number of Respondents = 228)**

Faculty	For Assignment Purposes	For Research Purposes	For gaining Knowledge
Health Sciences	12	7	12
Engineering & Technology	26	19	19
Education	29	10	16
Law	35	12	12
Pharmacy	28	14	19
Science	25	16	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>155(68%)</b>	<b>78 (34.2%)</b>	<b>94 (41.2%)</b>

### 3. Types of Material Normally Used

The student respondents were asked to state the types of materials they normally used in the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi library collection. The findings showed that a high percentage (65.8%) of the students used books, pamphlets for their information needs, followed by (15.8%) students who used newspapers clippings, while (11.8%) of the respondents used different journals in the serial.

The findings also revealed that the same percentage (11.4%) of the students used both the government publications, theses and dissertations in the library collection for their information needs. The least used type of material was the audio-visual ones (4.8%). This can be as a result of the majority of students being undergraduates still pursuing their first degree in the faculties.

**Table 4**  
**Types of Materials normally Used by Students**  
**(Number of Respondents = 228)**

Types of Information Materials Used	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Books, pamphlets	150	65.8%
Newspapers clippings	36	15.8%
Serial	27	11.8%
Government Publications	26	11.4%
Theses and Dissertations	26	11.4%
Audio/Visual Materials	11	4.8%

### **Recommendations**

The problems identified by users must be solved to enable them to make more effective use of the library. In the light of the above, the following recommendations are made.

1. Concerning the difficulty in the use of the catalogues, it is recommended that the existing "Library Instruction Programme" is intensified further for students and research fellows.  
 Arrangements could be made to make it an examinable course for all first year students. The university librarian could take this up and present a memorandum on it for the approval of the Academic Board of the University. The aim of the programme is not to make the users professional librarians but rather to help them in their information retrieval. At present, most of the students do not attach much importance to the programme because they are not examined on it. Moreover, the yearly orientation programme for fresh students should be organized by the library in the first semester of the year from the third or fourth week, when the new students have settled down.
2. Another recommendation is that there should be a provision for faculty libraries in Obafemi Awolowo University. In this regard, it is recommended that all the faculty libraries should be automated and a local area network should be developed so as to make it possible for users in one library to access the collections of another faculty library.
3. It is strongly recommended that the guiding system of Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library must be improved. There should be floor plans and signs directing users to different areas of the library where various services are offered. This will reduce users' dependence on library staff for basic information and guidance.

4. Faculties should have special notice boards on which notices concerning materials and services of the central and faculty libraries could be posted to inform users of current materials received at the libraries. On such notice boards, the contents pages of journals on various subjects could be posted weekly. This will help researchers become aware of articles that appear in journals relevant to their researches. At the Central Library, there should be brief instructions on how to use the catalogue written on plaques placed on the catalogue cabinet. This will guide users on how to use the catalogue and thus improve their level of awareness of the available collections relevant to their courses.
5. It is suggested that on an annual basis, the Central Library should organize what may be called a 'Library Week' during which lectures and seminars are held on the use of the library. Lectures on the collections and facilities at the various libraries could also be given. This is aimed at making students, lecturers and research fellows aware of the libraries' stock and services. The programme must be publicized extensively so that it is well attended. The faculty libraries must be included in the programme and the staff well involved.
6. The University Librarian should organize in-service training for library assistants. This can be done quarterly and during the training; staff should be advised to be polite and friendly to users so as to attract them to use the libraries regularly.
7. A library newsletter should be published quarterly and distributed among students, lecturers, and research fellows to keep them informed of available collections (especially current acquisitions) in the libraries.

## **Conclusion**

The Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection is an academic library, therefore it has an important role to play in supporting the learning and research activities of Obafemi Awolowo university, Ile-Ife, Nigeria. This role is realized and can be adequately achieved by having relevant information resources and easily accessible to the students.

The students, on the other hand, have to be aware of both the collection and its information services for the above role to be realized. This research has established the facts that the majority of students were aware of the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection and that most of them were also aware of the information services provided. Furthermore, the research also established that most of the students consulted the Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection.

The study has shown that a large number of students used the collection for learning purposes while doing their assignment while a number of them used it for research purposes. Therefore, it was well established that the role of Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library collection as an academic library that is supposed to provide support for learning and research is being fulfilled.

## References

- Boakye, Joseph (1999). "Users' awareness and use of science and technology collections at the University of Science and Technology (UST) libraries". *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science* 31(4) December, 1999.
- Harrison, Colin and Beenham, Rosemary (1985). *The Basics of Librarianship*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London: Clive Bingley. Pp. 25 - 30.
- Herring, J. (1986). "Information technology and User' Education". *Audiovisual Librarian*, 12(13), pp. 155 - 156.
- Jager, Karimde (1991). "Whom do we serve? User Perceptions in a South African University Library". *South African Journal of Library and Information Science*, 54(4), 276 - 281.
- Omosini, A and Adediran, A. A. (1988). *Great Ife: A history of University of Ife from 1962 - 1987*. Ife: University Press Limited. Pp 40 - 135.