

EVALUATIVE STUDY OF INFORMATION RESOURCES AND SERVICES UTILIZATION FOR RESEARCH IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated information resources and services utilization for research in academic libraries in Niger state, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research method was used for the study and 292, representing 5% of a total of 5847 lecturers in the 10 academic institutions in the state were sampled based on certified proportionate sampling technique. Consequently, 292 copies of questionnaire were administered and 280 were returned and found usable. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data gathered. The results indicated that more of information resources in print format were provided at the expense of those in non-print, conventional services such as loan of books and photocopying etc were adequately provided while selective dissemination of information, indexing and abstracting services were completely abandoned. Certain factors such as inadequate funding of the libraries etc were found to be militating against the provision and utilization of information resources and services. The study recommended among others that academic libraries should be adequately funded and qualified and experienced staff should be employed to provide required resources and services.

KEYWORDS: Academic Libraries, Information, Information Resources, Information Services, Utilization, Research

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries are those that are established in tertiary institutions such as Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education etc. Their major function is to provide information resources and services that support the attainment of the broad objectives of teaching learning and research activities of the parent institution. Okiy (2011) support this view when the author argued that the roles of academic libraries in Nigeria are to effectively support the institutions to attain the key functions of teaching, research and community service. It could therefore, be argued further that the position of academic libraries in institutions of higher learning cannot be overemphasized. This is because Bitagi and Garba (2008) observed that academic institutions and libraries are like identical twins who share everything together possibly on equal basis.

The term information has recently witnessed a variety of definitions. For example, Bitagi (2013) defined it as news that comes to the receiver for the first time which enables the receiver to take action according to expectations. On the other hand, Mohammed (2011) elaborately argued that information can be conceived as anything that adds to knowledge, ideas, skills and experiences positively or negatively that enables the receiver to take decisions or react to situations immediately or later. It could therefore, be deduced that at whatever time decision is taken, after receiving information, depends to a large extent on the body content of information. Thus, while information is expected to be self explanatory, it should equally serve as a guide to the receiver as regards when to take decision and also determines the

goals to be achieved and the right time to achieve it. Information is therefore, necessary for the well-being and development of individuals and society at large in the attempt to achieve political, socio-economic, religious, industrial, scientific and technological advancement.

Information resources constitute a range of materials and equipment gathered by the library in order to meet the information needs of both intended and anticipated users. Aliyu (2006) corroborate this view when the author argued that information resources are made up of a variety of materials which information could be stored, retrieved and disseminated for use. Specifically, information resources include such things as books, journals, theses; dissertations, technical report and all related materials in print format and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and related electronic gadgets which store or provide information worldwide without any serious geographical barrier capable of satisfying the diverse information needs of researchers.

Information services in academic libraries are the various ways and means by which information professionals provide, organize, store, retrieve and disseminate information to researchers and or users generally. The variety of information services offered by any library depends to a great extent on the quality and experience of the librarians. It is in relation to this analysis that Aju and Ape (2011) noted that a library is concerned with the acquisitions, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination of recorded information for the purpose of reading, study and consultation. Conventionally, information services include bibliography compilation, indexing, abstracting, selective dissemination of information, current awareness service etc which makes it possible for researchers to access required information without delay from the printed information resources. With the availability of ICT in libraries, the above mentioned services are provided with relative ease through the internet facilities. That is why it becomes mandatory for all academic libraries to combine the provision of both conventional and modern information resources so as to meet today's information demand of the researchers.

Utilization of information resources and services is the extent to which the resources and services of the library are actually used for teaching, learning and research. The extent to which information resources and services are utilized in academic libraries is usually captured by the library statistics which is compiled on daily basis by the library staff. It therefore, becomes pertinent that in order to gauge the extent to which library resources and services are utilized, the library staff must be proactive in providing statistics of usage on daily basis. This will serve as encouragement or otherwise to the sponsors of the library.

Research in the on the hand has a variety of meanings. Relevant to this study however, Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) defined the term as man's systematic and empirical investigation into existing but hidden elements in nature with the purpose of unearthing, restructuring and explaining such elements for the purpose of development. Research in the context of this research is therefore, the extent to which academic staff in higher institutions in Niger state have identified and explained all these existing but hidden natural resources in order to propel into great heights the development of the state and Nigeria at large.

From the foregoing, it could be deduced that there is a dare need for the provision of library and information resources and services and the need to utilize same for the actualization of research activities in higher institutions in Niger state in particular and Nigeria as a whole so as to achieve socio-economic, scientific and technological development.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Aguolu in Okiy (2011) argued that academic library is the heart of the institution. This according to Okiy is because the academic health, intellectual vitality and effectiveness of any institution depends largely on the state of health and excellence of its library which is its life hood. To buttress this point, Okiy cited the British University Grants Committee as having noted that an adequate library is not only the basis of all teaching and study; it is the essential condition of research without which additions cannot be made to the sum of human knowledge.

Bitagi and Udoudou (2013) argued that the availability of all forms and types of information resources in academic libraries is highly imperative if these libraries are to meet with the information needs of researchers in their parent institutions. The authors however, observed that due to high cost of information resources and related problems, information resources in most academic libraries are inadequate and outdated to meet the demand for current research. Adewumi (2003) found out that despite the problems of inadequate and absolute information resources, scientists still rely heavily on their use. The consequent result of this action is the production of sub-standard research result which will contribute minimally to Nigeria's development in every sector of national economy.

Gbaje and Okojie (2010) identifies that university libraries in Nigeria, like all other university libraries provide information services that enable users to locate, evaluate and access information in a variety of formats. In that respect therefore, academic libraries in Niger state are expected to provide all necessary information services that best meet the information needs of their numerous users. Unfortunately however, Odusanya and Osinulu in Gbaje and Okojie lamented the gross under funding of state universities which has adverse effect on the academic library collections and subsequently, the services they could offer.

Cox and Janti (2013) identified use as an activity which measures the worth of an item to a library or information system. Use is therefore, the single criterion which could be used to determine the reason for retaining a document within the collection of a library, and use is essential in guiding the collection development effort of the library. Use also justifies the need for institutions to adequately finance their libraries or not. Consequently, the need to use information resources and services of academic libraries is to enhance the attainment of the research objectives of their parent institutions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to:

- Identify the types of information resources provided by the academic libraries in Niger state.
- Identify the types of services offered by academic libraries in Niger state.
- Determine the extent to which information resources and services are utilized by lecturers in academic institutions in Niger state.
- Ascertain the level of satisfaction derived by the lecturers in using the information resources and services.
- Determine the factors militating against utilization of information resources and services.
- Make recommendations that could enhance the provision and utilization of information resources and services.

RESEARCH METHODS

Descriptive survey research was used for the study. The population of the study was made up of 5,847 lecturers from the ten academic institutions in Niger state. The sample of the study is 297 based on certified proportionate sampling technique where 5% of 5,847 lecturers were selected from each institution. Structured questionnaire and observation were used as methods of data collection. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics with frequencies and percentages computed in tables.

RESULTS

Table 1: Response Rate

No. Administered	No. Returned	%
292	280	95.9

Table 1 shows that 292 questionnaire were administered while 280 representing 95.9% were returned and found usable.

Table 2: Types of Information Resources Provided

S/N	Information Resources	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Textbooks in all subjects	256	91.4
2.	Technical journals	102	36.4
3.	Technical reports	121	43.2
4.	Thesis/Dissertations	233	83.2
5.	Reference books of all types	253	90.4
6.	Newspapers/magazines	262	93.6
7.	Stand alone computers	127	45.4
8.	Networked computers	111	39.6

Table 2 shows that majority, 262 (93.6%) of the respondents agreed that they were provided with newspapers/magazines. This was followed by 256 (91.4%); 253 (90.4%) and 233 (83.2%) of the respondents who agreed that they were provided with textbooks in all subjects; reference books of all types and theses/dissertations, respectively. On the other hand, the Table further reveals that minority of the respondents, 102 (36.4%) and 111 (39.6%) indicated that they were provided with technical journals and networked computers, among others.

An observation made by these researchers showed that most of the information resources provided were inadequate while those in print format were equally obsolete.

Table 3: Types of Services Offered

S/N	Services	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)	0	0
2.	Bibliography compilation	0	0
3.	Indexing and abstracting	0	0
4.	Current awareness	109	38.9
5.	Photocopying	258	92.1
6.	Bindery	166	59.3
7.	Loan of books	280	100
8.	Internet facilities	111	39.6

Table 3 reveals that majority, 280 (100%) and 258 (92.1%) of the respondents agreed to have been offered loan of books and photocopying services respectively. These were followed by 166 (59.3%); 111 (39.6%) 109 (38.9%) who indicated that they were offered with bindery; internet facilities and current awareness services in that order. Unfortunately however, none, 0 (0%) of the lecturers agreed that selective dissemination of information; bibliography compilation and indexing and abstracting services were offered by academic libraries in Niger state.

Table 4: Extent to Which Information Resources and Services Were Utilized

S/N	Extent of Use	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Very high extent	55	19.6
2.	High extent	71	25.4
3.	Low extent	49	17.5
4.	Very low extent	105	37.5
Total		280	100

Table 4 reveals that the extent to which information resources and services provided by academic libraries was to a low extent. This was agreed to by the majority 154 (55%) of the lecturers. On the other hand, the resources and services were utilized to a high extent by the minority, 126 (45%) of the respondents.

Table 5: Level of Satisfaction Derived

S/N	Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Highly satisfied	45	16.1
2.	Very satisfied	81	28.9
3.	Moderately satisfied	93	33.2
4.	Low satisfaction	61	21.8
Total		100	100

Table 5 reveals that majority 154 (55%) of the respondents were not satisfied with the use of information resources and services provided by academic libraries in Niger state. However, the Table further shows that minority 126 (45%) of the users were satisfied with the resources and services provided.

Table 6: Factors Militating against the Provision and Utilization of Information Resources and Services

S/N	Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Inadequate funding of the library	280	100
2.	Lack of qualified and experienced staff	215	76.8
3.	Lack of current and adequate resources	237	84.6
4.	No orientation/training of users	251	89.6
5.	Inadequate library services	266	95.0
6.	Inadequate library space for lecturers	278	99.3
7.	The period and number of loan is inadequate	280	100
8.	Constant power outage	275	98.2
9.	High cost of information resources	280	100

Table 6 shows that majority, 280 (100%) of the respondents agreed that inadequate funding of the library, the period and number of loan is inadequate, and high cost of information resources were major factors militating against the provision and utilization of information resources and services. These were followed by 278 (99.3%), 275 (98.2%), and 266 (95.0%) of these who indicated that inadequate library space for lecturers, constant power outage, and inadequate library services were also constraints in the provision and utilization of information resources and services, among others

DISCUSSIONS

Table 2 reveals that to some extent, information resources provided in print format were above average while those in non-print format were below average. This means that despite the fact that effort have been made to meet the need for which the libraries were established as pointed out by Okiy (2011), a lot more need to be done in updating the quantity and currency of information resources in print format while greater effort should be made to acquire those in non-print format.

Table 3 shows that the conventional services such as selective dissemination of information, bibliography, compilation, indexing and abstracting services were completely not provided by academic libraries as indicated by all, 250 (100%) of the lecturers. The provision of internet services was also inadequate. This finding is contrary to the view of Bitagi and Udohdoh (2013) who argued that availability of all forms and types of information resources and services in academic libraries is highly imperative if such libraries are to meet with the information needs of their researchers.

Table 4 shows that a greater number of lecturers, 154 (55%) used the information resources and services to a low extent. This action does not justify the resources devoted for library development in academic institutions. In another sense, it will discourage the management of the institutions from improving the budget to libraries because lack of use of library resources and services is sine qua non to lack of research which is one of the major functions of academic institutions.

Table 5 however revealed that majority of lecturers, for one reason or the other were not satisfied with the use of resources and service put in place for them. That is to suggest that there is something wrong with both the resources and services. To improve the utilization of the libraries and satisfactory level of users, the libraries need to be equipped with both resources and services.

Table 6 revealed that funding, in particular was a major factor militating against the provision and utilization of information resources. Odusanya and Osiriulu in Gbaje and Okojie (2010) corroborated this finding when the authors discovered that gross underfunding of state universities has adverse effect on the academic library collections and subsequently, the services they could offer. These researchers are of the view that funding is principal among all factors militating against library development, for if funding level is improved, all other factors will be improved upon.

CONCLUSIONS

The study discovered that provision of information resources in print format are prioritized in academic institutions in Niger state at the expense of those in non-print format. Equally, traditional library services have been abandoned while utilization of resources and services are at its low ebb. However, the researchers were not wholly satisfied with the use of available information resources and services due to certain factors arising from inadequate funding, among others.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made in view of the findings of the study:

- Academic libraries should be adequately funded to provide needed information resources and services.

- Qualified and experienced staff should be employed to provide required library and information resources and services.
- Current and adequate information resources should be provided in all academic libraries.
- All the lecturers should be trained on how to use the library effectively.
- Alternative source of power should be provided for all academic libraries.
- All lecturers should be encouraged to publish books in their areas of specialization to reduce cost and reliance on foreign publications.

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