User Perception of Library Services in the University of Calabar Library, Calabar

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Abstract

User perception of library services in the University of Calabar was investigated and analyzed in order to determine what opinions the user hold about the services provided by library. The survey research methodology was utilized for data collection of which the questionnaire was basically the main instrument. Structured questionnaire was administered to eight hundred and fifty (850) library users, they were retrieved, collated and analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as percentages. Results indicate that not all library services meet the expectation and information needs of library users. However, 280 responses represent (32.95%) perceived the services to be effective; 159 responses (30.47%) agreed that the service were fairly effective; while 311 responses (36.55%) rated the services as being ineffective. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Library and Librarian should embrace modern technologies such as electric mail services, internet connectives, CD-ROM, audio-visuals, facsimile services as new devices of information acquisition, organization and dissemination to information users(157 **Words**)

Key words: User, Perception, Library, University

Introduction

The university is meant for the development of knowledge applicable to the practical needs of the individual, society and the general training need of people for diverse professions. Research has proved that University education worldwide has survived due to two basic valid services it renders to both the teachers and the society. These include the satisfaction of man's insatiable desire to know and the societal crave for knowledge. Furthermore, one of the remarkable changes that has taken place in the University is the ability of students to learn as it best suits them after secondary school. The modern University with a large faculty, tremendous enrolment and huge resources is expected to make significant contribution to different areas of knowledge.

In Nigeria, a library in the profession use of word is a planned collection of books non-book materials, exhibits and other records or documents. The library collects and collates these materials published and unpublished, print and non-print in some depth and globally in all fields of knowledge besides those offered in the University. Libraries of all kinds have a contribution to make to the educational and cultural life of the countries in which they serve. They are natural data collection points. Of all the information providers, 'Library' remains the most dependable source of information. This is because it is most comprehensive and the cheapest traditional source of information. It contains information in a wide variety of formats and access to the information is relatively cheap and in some cases completely free. The University library by definition is port of the University, its job is to aid the University to achieve its aims and objectives. The library occupies a central and primary position in the University because it performs all the functions of the University such as teaching, research, creation of new knowledge and transmission of information to the users.

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The primary function of academic library is to fulfill the information needs of the instructional programmes of its parent's institution and research needs of students, faculty, members of staff of academic community.

In addition, its major function is to provide necessary guides by which user will be made aware of the available resources. One of such guides is the provision of a well-organized library catalogue. The University library is the most instrumental and intellectual resource of the academic community where the teacher is conveniently carrying out research to keep abreast of the new development in his field and to deliver his foods with ability and confidence. Exists to educate students, conducts research and most importantly, publishes research findings for the advancement of its immediate society and entire humanity. Therefore, the University library is the heart and principal instrument of the University in the conservation of recoded accumulated knowledge. Every University Library should aim at meeting the objectives of the university that established and funded it.

University Libraries offer among other things a wide range of services such as;

i.   Loan Services
ii.   Reference Services
iii. Information Services
iv.   Provision of study facility services
v.   Referral Service
vi.   Library education/skills services
vii. Inter-Library cooperation service
viii. Photocopying service
ix.   Exhibit and display
x.   Current awareness and dissemination of information
xi.   Reservation of books or journals etc.

Above all, for the services of the library to be appreciated, Provision of library services to the user of library is the primary objective of the librarian in the university. The library is one of the instruments needed for the improvement of educational standards and the key to national development. Information and resources are necessary ingredients for rapid university growth and attainment of its' set goals to the users, therefore, librarians must broaden their concept by accepting the fact that their services should be for all users of the library. Quality and efficient library services encourage the user in feedback and participation, design and implementation, and development of trust to meet their expected desires. The user perceptions of a library service have the ability to evolve and improve rapidly on educational activities. The user of a library service is a participant, co-operator, builder and consultant whether the product is vital or physical.

Libraries are service oriented organizations established for the provision of relevant information resources and quality services to meet their users' information needs. Meeting the information needs of the users require the provision of actual information resources and services that will satisfy the need of the users. Technology and automation have also changed the way people perceive libraries. As a result, the roles of libraries and librarians themselves have been re-evaluating their role as reflected in many literatures. They emphasize the provision of good and quality services as more important to the user than mere physical library building. Accessing service quality is therefore the first step in retaining customers in today's competitive environment. When library customers perceived with a variety of alternative channels of information delivery, many of which are more convenient and can compete on cost, libraries need to re-examine the range and quality of service they provide and develop systems for consultation and cooperation with their customer needs and customer expectations to the highest degree just to retain them.

User perception could be geared towards the library environment which entails good interior and exterior aesthetic structure. Stimulating clean, free from noise pollution from cell phones, generators, blast of motor horns, noise from passers-by, staff talking, banging of doors, music from rallies and bad odour from the toilets. Library environment could affect users, staff and library resources in the absence of light, ventilation, temperature, humidity control, layout of stack, convenience and adequate space. The location of a university library building should be in proximity to faculties, departments and lecture halls where the entire users will have quick access, to encourage the user to stay long in the library thereby satisfying their academic needs. For a user to benefit from the services rendered by the university library, these environmental factors must be put on check.

Therefore, the user perception of services offered in the library provides useful feedbacks which are determinants for library effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery.

Literature Review

Some literature exists in the area of user perception of library in Nigerian University Libraries but there is hardly anyone with specific focus on the opinion of the library users of University of Calabar Library. Good quality services are what users expected from their libraries. And library needs to know who its actual users are and what they need in order to provide them with required services.

The overriding aim of the University Library is research, study, teaching and learning (Issah and Kayoma, 2005). It does this by providing the information resources which will aid these activities. The material support only makes sense if users exploit it to achieve their own ends. One factor that makes optimum utilization of library resources possible is the conducive study environment. Edoka (2000) spines that since home and office accommodation are oftentimes less than adequate in terms of study facilities especially in developing countries like Nigeria, it becomes worthwhile to a good number of carrels in the form of separate cubicles or rooms in answer to the demand for seclusion required by the more advanced library user. In addition, other measures like noise control, padded chairs and air conditions are usually provided to encourage use of libraries.

The University library on its parts is an integral of the University. According to the world Book Encyclopedia (2001) the university library is a major source of any modern institution of higher education: it is a complex institution that must have large quantities of materials to meet the demand of both students and faculty. In his view, Onwubiko (2005) hold that the university libraries also known as academic libraries exist to enhance the acquisition of knowledge by their clientele through the provision of reading materials for the purpose of reading, learning and research.Amkpa (2000) revealed that the resources of university libraries are consciously built up and organized for users' maximum exploitation for effective performances of university libraries as instruments of educational development. Student use performance and (perception) too should be one of the determining factors to measure the extent of effectiveness of academic libraries in fulfilling their set objective of the university system.

Ehigiafor (2002) posits that as a resources centre, the library occupies the central and primary place because it serves all the functions of a university-teaching learning and research, the creation of new knowledge and the transmission of posterity of the learning and culture of the present and future generation.

According to Ujuanbi (2005) well stocked and efficient libraries act as pathfinders for researchers and provide them with the impetus to sufficient knowledge of the information needs of users. Similarly, Ahidzu (2003) documented services designed and rendered by a university library to meet the need of its peculiar environments and audience which invariably includes students and other users such as academic and non-academic staffs as well a professional living within the university's catchments area.

Specifically, on user education, Ottong and Edem (2016) explain that the library provides this services in order to equip the user with sufficient knowledge on the use of library effectively. The library use instructions are the Librarian's ability to help a user develop skills to use the resource of the library independently. Busayo (2003) sees the use of library as and its perception of the services provided as a requisite for all freshmen (undergraduates). Elaturoni (2000) stated that no single library, no matter the largeness of its information resources can be rich enough to provide all the resources relevant to the information needs of its users. Hence, the relevance of inter-library and other resource-sharing programmes among libraries.

Ofre, Odu and Okwueze (2004) cited the university of Calabar as example of academic library whose main functions are to provide, preserve and organize materials for teaching, learning and research.

Objective of the study

This study was undertaken on the bases of under listed objectives
- Determine the user perception of library services
- Determine whether the library as a place of study is actually meeting the needs of users
- Determine ways of improving the services provided by the library.

Methodology

The survey research technique was adopted for this work and research design is a case study. The research instrument is the questionnaire supported by documentary sources. This method was chosen because of its economy of used and it requires less time and effort in administration. It also present ideas, opinions and copies of well-structured questionnaire were used for the work and they were self administered by the researcher with the assistance of some library workers the essence was to ensure high response rate and to explain certain items of the instruments to the respondents where the need arose. Another procedure for data collection was the interview method, primary and secondary sources, as well as the researcher's personal observation technique.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Categories of users

Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Undergraduates	450	52.94
Postgraduates	210	24.71
Academic staff member	110	12.90
Non-academic staff	60	7.10
Outside researchers	20	2.35
Total	**850**	**100**

The respondents were carefullyselected random sampling method to ensure that all categories of users were fully represented in the sampling size. A sample size of 850 subjects ranging from undergraduates to the outside researchers was randomly selected for the study.

Table 2: Frequency of Library User

Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Frequently	400	47.05
Occasionally	200	23.53
Daily	100	11.76
Rarely	90	10.6
Never	60	7.06
Total	**850**	**100**

Table 2 show the frequency of library use by the respondents. From the table, as many as 400 users representing 47.05% used the library frequently; 200 (23.53%) visited the library for their academic works occasionally; 100 (11.76%) said they used the library daily. Furthermore, 90 (10.6%) rarely use the library while 60 (7.06%) respondents never used the library at all.

Table 3: Some services provided by the University Library

Loan and inter-library loan services
Photocopy services
Reference and bibliographic services
Current awareness and selective dissemination of information services
Exhibition and display services
Library collection and facilities
User education services
Abstracting and indexing services
Internet services
Audio-visual services

Table 3 is a highlight of the services rendered by the University library under study. The essence was to give a succinct highlight of the services offered as to display them in the visual than leaving them in the imagination perspective.

Table 4: User perception to services rendered

Services	Responses	Percentage (%)
Loan and inter-library loan service	200	23.52
Photocopy services	150	17.65
Current awareness and dissemination of information (SDI)	40	4.70
Reference and bibliographic services	120	14.11
Exhibition and display services	60	7.06
Library collection and facilities	100	11.77
User education service	80	9.41
Abstracting and indexing services	50	6.9
Internet service	30	3.53
Audio-visual services	20	2.35
Total	**850**	**100**

Table 4 indicates types of services rendered and the perception levels of these services by library users. Loan and inter-library loan services are perceived as being significantly effective as 200 respondents representing 23.52% agreed on this. This is closely followed by photocopy services 150 (17.65%). Another effective service is represented and bibliographic service shows 120 respondents (11.77%) rate the service as being fairly effective. Other services perceived by the user as not attractive or motivating include user education 80 (9.41%), exhibition and display services 60 (7.06%), internet services 30 (3.53%) and lastly, audio-visual services 20 (2.35%). At a glance, it can be observed that those services not significantly perceived by the respondents need to be improved by the library.

Table 5: User satisfaction with the services provided

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very satisfying	10	1.17
Satisfying	5	0.58
Fairly satisfying	300	35.30
Least satisfying	255	30.00
Never satisfying	280	32.95
Total	**850**	**100**

The University library is expected to be a place for quiet study and research, where information materials are daily collected and organized for all library users. Besides, effective services are required. In order to gather varying opinions, the respondents were asked to indicate how much they are satisfied with the services rendered. Information in table 6 show that 280 respondents representing (32.95%) said that they were least satisfied with the internet and audio-visual services which are very important for improved academic works. Be it as it may, 300 respondents (35.3%) were fairly satisfied with loan services. While 10 (1.17%) and 5 (0.58%). Spine that photocopy and reference services gave them satisfaction. Based on this analysis, effective services and conducive reading environment are provided.

Conclusion

The study on the user perception of the services of a University library; the case of University of Calabar is a fact-finding research aimed at eliciting the necessary feedback from library users.

From the finding of the study, one of the aspirations of University library is to satisfy the information need of the user. Assessing the library from the user perception provides on the assessments criteria for achieving this goal. Thus, user perception can be measured by such parameters as library collection, services accessibility, staff disposition, frequency of library use, library facilities and environment. Specifically, the finding of this study will definitely act as a guide to the management of University of Calabar library in order to identify the strengths and weakness of its services.

Recommendation

Based on the finding and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Assessment of the quality of library services should better be based on the user's judgment or operation.
2. Funds should be made available to procure such facilities like air-conditions, generator, tables, seats which enhance reading
3. The access points to effective delivery of service in the library should be enhanced such as adequate guiding, signposting and standard catalogue provision
4. The library and the librarian should embrace modern technologies such as electric mail services, internet connectives, CD-ROM, audio-visuals, facsimile services as new devices of information acquisition, organization and dissemination to information users.

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