

Utilization of Library Books to Enhance Academic Excellence in Nigeria Tertiary Institution: A Case Study of Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, O. A. U., Ile-ifé

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ABSTRACT Many academic libraries are currently caught between pressures of increasing library usage and reduced budget. The rapid growth in student enrolments over the last few years has greatly increased the client group of academic libraries. The use made of library books by staff and students of Obafemi Awolowo University from 1997/98 to 2000/2001 sessions was surveyed. The objectives of the study are to provide an approximate estimation of the existing circulating population and to evaluate how books are used. The results revealed that maximum use of the library books were made. A total of 88,835 volumes of books were borrowed for home use while 981,880 volumes were consulted. A total of 932,940 readers made use of the library facilities.

INTRODUCTION

The philosophy of librarianship is based on the concept of library service and provision of relevant materials for users. To this end, Professional Librarians continue to struggle to collect and organize printed and other forms of recorded knowledge in order to satisfy both present and future users. The effectiveness of a library as an instrument of learning is determined by the success with which it is able to provide the user with the information he seeks. The library can fulfil its function best by pursuing a policy of constant self-evaluation in order to be alert to the changing needs of its users. But how can a library know whether it is satisfactorily playing its role?

In providing answer to this question, Fowowe (1989) opined that the ultimate authority, the library user, is the most logical source of answer. Self-evaluation or assessment of any library can produce worthwhile results, particularly, it can provide information which will assist the library administrators in their planning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The last few years have witnessed an increase in the number of students admitted into the University. An introduction of new courses in a changing marketing environment where books and journals are the essential commodities needed for academic excellence. Course outlines have laid particular stress on heuristic learning meth-

ods, which have given rise to an increase use of the University Library and a consequent growth in demand for library materials. It was largely an attempt to countenance problem of such increased demand with minimal staff and books purchased occasioned this study.

The sudden hike and surge in book price and reduction in academic library budgets have led to the predicament that some academic libraries are not able to provide adequate number of needed textbooks and journals. This concern is fuelled by several other factors such as: increase in student enrolments; and degree courses becoming more library based. This has resulted to people seeing library as a provider of fewer books for more students and staff, who are the main market of library services.

Concerns about the problems caused by too many students chasing too few books were already being voiced several years ago (Feather and Marriott, 1993). This situation was somehow intensified in recent years. In recent years, there have also been funding losses in real terms across the University sector which has been combined, in some Universities, with cuts in library expenditure as a percentage of University expenditure (Tysome, 1996; Sumsion, 1997). This correspondingly means that few books may be bought per student. To buttress this, a recent survey of University libraries revealed that changes in teaching methods resulting from attempt to cope with higher student numbers, place an additional strain on library resources (Cockrill, 1997).

Interestingly, an alternative means of increas-

ing item availability is that of following the very opposite strategy of relaxing rather than tightening access to core texts by opening up a tradition. That is, most of their stocks are on the open shelves where users have easy access to them.

Ephraim (1994) provided a useful summary on the use of quantitative and qualitative measures in collection evaluation. He stressed that a blend of measures is required, circulation data is the strongest single element we have on which to base decisions and that could be used by subject librarians along with their professional judgement and user's satisfaction surveys to evaluate and fine-tune their collections.

The view of Ranganathan is well appreciated pointing out the relationship between books and the readers. Librarians therefore, should make sure that library collections are readily made available to readers and evaluated from time to time.

Ranganathan's five library science can be summed up as:

1. Books are for use
2. Every reader his book
3. Every book its read
4. Save the time of the reader
5. A library is a growing organization.

It is a system that makes the reader more important than the book. The words of an American Librarian are worth quoted here in full:

"In the United states, we tend to feel a loyalty to the reader more than to the books. We open our shelves, knowing that some books will be stolen or mutilated. We offer reference service to all knowing that we will wear out some of our expensive reference tools on questions of minor importance. We allow books to circulate, knowing that some will never be returned. We purchase books more with attention to their content than to their format or their value as artifacts. We see a need to give reader what he wants, sometimes more than to buy books that deserve representation on the shelves of a library, especially if they will have no current readers".

Considering the results of previous studies, readers are more significant to their library than books. In this respect, the paper is out to portray significant the pattern of the use of books in the library in the last four sessions.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

This study was designed to provide an approximate estimation of the existing circulating

population and to evaluate how books are used, for the use factors will aid in planning and justifying library activities.

Obafemi Awolowo Hezekiah Oluwasanmi University library is centrally located within the academic areas of the University. It serves all the staff and students of the University who comprise the entire market. The library can sit conveniently at least 3,000 readers at a time. Most of its stocks are on the open shelves with a few exceptions, all are available for home loan by the registered users of the library. Furthermore, the library houses more than 300,000 volumes of books and monographs.

The library opens its doors to users all days of the week from 7.30 a.m. – 9.30 p.m. on week days (i.e., Monday – Friday) and on Saturday, 7.30 a.m. – 3.30 p.m. and on Sunday, 1.30 p.m. – 9.30 p.m. However, during vacation, the opening hours are between 7.30 a.m. – 5.30 p.m. on week days (i.e., Monday – Friday) and on Saturday and Sunday, library is closed.

METHODOLOGY

For this study, the authors explored extensively both primary and secondary sources of information. And the instrument used is the structured set of questionnaires distributed to one thousand and one hundred readers. The questionnaires designed were administered to the users of the library to find out readers' frequency in the library and to know the activities of the readers in the library.

The secondary sources of information were the monthly statistical records of the Circulation Section from 1997/98 to 2000/2001 sessions to determine the number of books borrowed, consulted and daily head count.

The data were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics and frequencies and percentages.

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

For this study, eight hundred and fifty eight (858) questionnaires were administered but only 95.0% acted as respondents.

In table 1, the classification of respondents according to their faculty were displayed. One hundred respondents were selected from each eleven faculties. Out of 1,100 copies of questionnaires administered, 903 copies were returned of which 858 (95.0%) copies were completely filled and found useful. The study cut across all the existing faculties in the university.

Figure 1 shows the frequency distribution of visit of the respondents to library. It reveals that 430 of the respondents visited the library everyday. Two hundred and six (206) did come to the library at least twice weekly. One hundred and fifty-six (156) used the library once a week.

Table 1: Classification of respondents according to their Faculty

Faculty	Absolute Freq.	No. of Returns	Complete
Administration	100	85	80
Agriculture	100	92	85
Arts	100	74	70
Education	100	85	84
EDM	100	85	84
Health Sciences	100	81	76
Law	100	78	70
Pharmacy	100	62	60
Science	100	98	95
Social Science	100	86	80
Technology	100	77	75
	1100	903	858

Table 2: Activities within the Library

Activities	Always	Sometimes	Never
Study without using library books	195 (22.7)	474 (55.3)	189 (22.0)
Use of library books within the library	474 (55.3)	269 (31.4)	94 (10.9)
Check out library books	496 (57.8)	273 (31.8)	86 (10.4)

No respondent did not use the library at all no matter how infrequent it was. The implication of this is that, students realized the contributions of the library and its resources to their academic pursuit; consequently, it enhances their academic excellence.

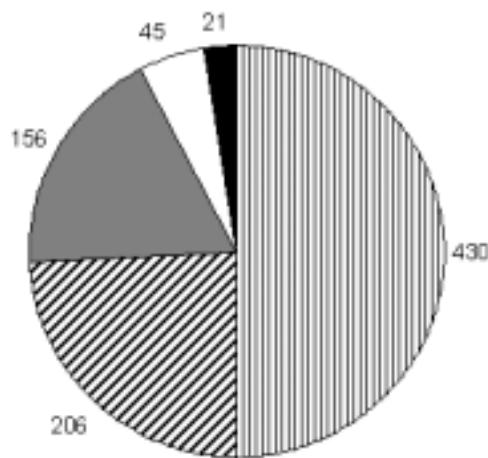


Fig.1. Frequency of visits to the Library

Table 2 reveals the activities of the respondents within the library. Fifty eight percent (58%) of the respondents were of the opinion that they constantly used the library books within the library. Also fifty eight percent (58%) always checked out library books, while fifty five percent (55%) sometimes studied without library books. About 10.9% of the respondents never use library books within or outside (home use) the library. In fact, the presentation in table 2 confirms submission that library is a seat for revolution within the city because that is where received ideas are questioned, especially when they are fundamental, because it is a place of liberty and open-mindedness which gives our society the ability to adapt in the long or medium term (Guinn, 1992). Correspondingly, it resulted to increased library usage from session to session.

Figure 2 reveals the number of books borrowed for home use and books consulted in the library per session. It also shows the number of readers who came to use the library either to consult or to

borrow books. The study indicates a progressive increase in the books borrowed and consulted from session to session; and also increase in the users population.

This progressive increase can be attributed to the awareness created through the introduc-

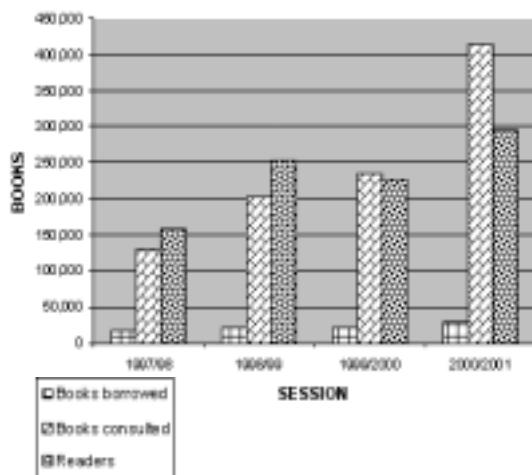


Fig. 2. Books consulted, borrowed and headcount

tion of Library Instructional Course (LIB 001) to all fresh men. And through the introduction of course outlines that have lain particular stress on heuristic learning methods.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study give a remarkable revelation. It is to the young people of today that libraries are of the greatest benefit. If Nigeria is to advance and our young people are to grasp the opportunities now open to them, they must be given access to books, periodicals, technical data and opinion, which will bring them into contact with cultural, scientific, technical and social ideas. At the lowest, this is necessary if they are not to be outstripped, by and subordinated in the future to their contemporaries from elsewhere who have such access and have profited from it.

The general conclusion to emerge from this study was that staff and students maximally utilized the library. There was a progressive increase in the number of books borrowed and consulted from session to session. It also showed an increase of library users from 159,134 in 1997/98 session to 295,121 in 2000/2001 session. The progressive increase in the utilization of library books is an indication that the library is meeting its primary role of supporting the objective of its parent institution. The library has been seen as a storehouse of knowledge because 50 percent of the respondents visited the library everyday.

RECOMMENDATION

Since there is increase in the number of library users, the researcher will want to make the following recommendations: Library environment should be made more pleasant and comfortable, since readers have made library their friend. More copies of recommended textbooks should be

made available on the shelves for readers. And the role of librarian should not be limited to one of technician, as is often stated now that learning alone is no longer sufficient justification to play the role of intermediary between the readers and the collection; cataloguer in the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, computer specialist at the beginning of automation, manager at the beginning of the managerial era, the librarian should today, in a time of evaluation, become statistician.

To sum up this, population growth, expansion of opportunities for formal and continuing education at all levels, and the rapidly increasing role of research coupled with the great increase in the amount of published material have combined to produce situations that require very substantial increase in quantity and quality of library services.

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