

Undergraduate Students' Use of the University Library and Access to Information in Madonna University, Okija, Nigeria

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to determine how access to information can be facilitated for undergraduate students of Madonna University. The global change in the roles of libraries and in the ways students access information in this modern era, in the COVID 19 pandemic has ushered in the need for regular review of students access to information. A case study research design was adopted for the study and out of a population of 1537 students in the faculty of social sciences, 200 were selected through stratified random sampling to participate in the study. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Data was analyzed using simple percentages, frequency and tables. The findings revealed that most of the undergraduate students visit the library occasionally, the appropriateness of the academic library resources available were ascertained, majority prefer using the library for assignment, examination and research purposes. Constraints in the use of academic library for academic and relevant purposes were; poor power supply, inadequate reference sources, inadequate reading space among others. It was recommended that a standard main library, equipped with necessary physical facilities and adequate reading space be made available. It was also recommended that the university management should as a matter of priority, provide alternative power supply to the library and enhance the reference sources and funds.

Keywords

Keywords: Information Access, Library Use, Academic Library, Madona University, Private University.

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Introduction

There are quite a number of universities in Nigeria, about 170 accredited universities made up of 43 Federal universities, 48 state universities, 79 private universities (NUC, 2022). Also, there are polytechnics and colleges of education and they all have academic libraries are established to support teaching, learning and research which are the core mandates of these institutions.(Akorporhonor, 2005). These are libraries designed to provide and accumulate recorded knowledge (published or unpublished), book and non-book materials relevant to prescribed academic discipline of tertiary educational institutions. They are

usually situated conspicuously within the campus of such academic institutions. Hence, the libraries of universities, polytechnics, colleges of technology, advanced studies and education etc., are therefore known as academic libraries. Academic libraries provide support for teaching and learning which require wide range of resources for the purpose of academic reading and writing students research papers (Ifidon, 2008). The importance of academic libraries in any academic institution cannot be overemphasized. They play the significant role of disseminating information and knowledge. It is on this premise that regulatory bodies of educational institutions refuse to accredit programmes of tertiary

institutions that fail to provide standard libraries for their students (Omolayole, 2016). Academic libraries differ greatly in range and size but possess certain common characteristics which differentiate them from public libraries. Whereas the public libraries are preoccupied with self-education, recreation and public information, the academic libraries are concerned with providing materials for the lecturers and students to satisfy their educational, research and information needs arising from academic course studies in the educational institutions (Benson and Allen, 2009). Academic libraries on campus can be centralized or decentralized or even both in which case there exist departmental libraries apart from the main library and other faculty libraries (Reitz, 2010). The main function of academic libraries is to support research and educational activities in universities, institutions and other academic organizations.

Benson and Allen (2009) stressed that preservation and access to knowledge and information are the main mandate of academic libraries alongside supporting the mission of their parent institutions which is teaching and research. Academic libraries are at the forefront in the provision of information services to their respective communities which comprises of students, lecturers and researchers in order to support their teaching, learning and research needs. Scholars have emphasized on the crucial role of academic libraries in research and scholarship in institutions of higher learning. Most times, academic libraries are referred to as the heart or nerve centers of institutions of higher learning where all academic activities are revolved (Ifidon, 2008).

Academic libraries in Nigeria are at a crossroads and this is because they are operating in era of dwindling finances where resources (financial and materials) are not forthcoming (Ishola, 2014). Nigerian academic libraries derive the greater part of

their funds from the government (both federal and states) (Okey, 2005). He notes that, of all the different types of libraries in Nigeria, only university libraries have a clearly defined policy of funding, because they are allocated 10% of the recurrent annual budget of their parent institutions. However, it is regrettable that such money is hardly released by University administration (Okey 2005 & Yetunde 2011). The situation in private universities also tends to portray a gloomy picture as the story seems to be the same. In fact, most private universities have their board of trustees to determine their library's financial allocation which is grossly inadequate (Yetunde, 2011). This ugly situation affects the efficiency and effectiveness of their functions. Besides this is the difficulty in the importation of books and journals from abroad due to the high rise in foreign exchange. This has deterred many academic libraries from acquiring current and relevant titles that will support the academic programmes of their parent institutions (Yetunde, 2011). Thus, the efforts of most academic libraries in providing modern information services are thwarted by the existence of the aforementioned problems whose genesis is that of inadequate funding.

Ugah (2007) listed obstacles to information access and use in developing countries as lack of awareness, crime, inaccessibility, staff, information explosion, declining budget and rising costs, cost for users, environment and poor infrastructure. According to this researcher, availability of resources is a key factor to information accessibility. However, information explosion hinders access to an extent because users cannot definitely access all the overwhelming resources available in their field.

Information technology (IT) literacy among academic librarians in most libraries is still at the peripheral level. Nok (2010) observed that many staff of university libraries are not computer literate as such they find it difficult

to cope with the requirements of the electronic age. The inability to use modern technologies by library users can hinder access to electronic resources. It is in this light that this research seeks to investigate how to facilitate access to resources in Madonna University Library.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate how academic library of Madonna University can facilitate access to information among undergraduate students. Specifically, the study objectives are:

1. Determine how often the undergraduate students of Madonna University make use of the academic library.
2. Find out the appropriateness of the academic library resources available.
3. Find out the problems students face in accessing information from the academic library.
4. Determine ways through which academic library resources and services can be improved for a better academic experience?

Literature Review

Adetola and Adewale (2018) noted that the massive turnout of users to patronize the library is an indication that the students are using the resources and that their information needs are being met. Also, Sivakumaren (2019) indicated that most users prefer print resources to e-resources and still borrow them to satisfy their information needs. On the contrary, researchers (Bakare, Bamigboye and Chiemenem, 2015) noted that electronic resources are gradually replacing print resources because of their usefulness in research, availability and ease of use. Erich (2013) analysed the role played by the university library in increasing the efficiency of access to electronic resources, and observed that access to online catalogues,

access to online databases, e-mail reference services, Internet access were some of the roles that can enhance efficiency of access to e-resources.

Ala (2010) observed that consistent use of the library improved user's ability to identify, retrieve and access information. Libraries are central to research activities and are responsible for the researchers' improved efficiency in their research works. According to Ala (2010) libraries have a fundamental role to play in quality education and research products of any university. Tertiary institutions on their own part can enhance efficiency of access by providing students with psychological peace and security along with necessary conditions and facilities.

The provision of necessary resources acilities in the library has been hindered by prevalent cuts in library budgets resulting in the reduction of services, most notably by closure, shorter opening hours, staff cuts and the replacement of library staff with typically unsustainable and fragmented volunteer-run services (Lietzau, 2004). For many people, the word library conjures up images of books and nothing more. Book collections however, remain a core feature of a library but libraries have much wider and more significant roles than just books collection.

Hecoin (2014) emphasized the need to design information provision mechanisms to increase usage and French (2012) observed that proliferation of information provision is a cumbersome task. He therefore advocated for speedy document delivery system and a greater need for partnership with users to shape collections for maximum satisfaction.

Consequently, the university library system must ensure closer relationship with its clientele and even among the library clients themselves. To achieve this laudable goal, library personnel should provide specialized information services which will compel students and lectures as well as other university community members to make

contacts with the library. Librarians must be convinced on the significance of library information products and services to their work. The library personnel must continuously ensure that the information products and services they offer to their users are fully utilized. If faculty staff and students are to make maximum use of library information products and services and derive greater benefits, they must first be informed of their availability and how these may be useful to their teaching and research activities. However, university libraries in Nigeria have not been taking user education programme very serious as a means of stimulating the use of library information products and services (Idoko, Asogwa & Ugwuanyi, 2015). In view of the fact that the library is one of the university educational resources and a sophisticated information system, faculty, staff and students can derive maximum benefit from it, only if they are taught how to sharpen their information handling skills.

Okey (2010) reported that students and faculty staff in Delta State University Abraka Nigeria made use of book material (Newspaper, Journals, Textbooks, Magazines, Projects, Dictionaries, Encyclopedias and Government documents). Also, Popoola (2000) found that academic social scientists in the Nigerian Universities utilized the following library information services, current awareness, photocopying, referencing, statically data analysis, E-mail, selective dissemination of information and on-line database searching in support of their research activities. Kemoni (2002) also studied the utilization of archival information by researchers in the University of Nairobi, Kenya and found that they utilize maps and atlases, gazettes, theses and dissertations newspapers, statistical abstracts, video films, political, record books, journals and conference papers.

Owalabi and Ojedokun (2003) investigated internet access competence and use of

internet for teaching and research activities by university of Botswana academic staff and reported that the respondents used internet facilities for literature search and to improve their teaching of students. Jagbora and Jojade (2015) found that academic staff in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria used subject catalogue in the library to locate and retrieve their needed information materials. Aguolu (2009) noted that the university library is the heart of the University because, the academic health, intellectual vitality and effectiveness of any University depends largely upon the state of health and excellence of its library which is its lifeblood. There are various methods of imparting the skill on the use of library. Aina (2004) asserted that "it could be one-to-one session approach in which case the reference librarian takes a new user round the various sections of the library where the librarian will explain the activities that go on in the different sections of the library without necessarily distracting the staff of the various sections. During the section the user is exposed to the basic services of a library, example how to use the catalogue to search for documents of interest, location of shelves etc.

Okey (2010) stated that "the library is an important academic sector of the university and that a university is as good as its library". When students use quality library materials, their academic performances are enhanced and the image of the institution is also promoted. A well-equipped academic library really has the welfare of the students and the entire institution in mind. Onyesiku (2010) emphasized that effective use of resources of the library by staff and students are expected to be the principal objective of establishing libraries in the university. It is equally a place to seek information and to supplement material and knowledge already provided in the classroom.

The philosophy of an academic library focuses on the provision of an active learning

space and diverse services to meet the various needs of students, faculty, staff and parents. Services such as 24/7 access to print and online resources, individual and group interaction and literature promotion offer students the opportunity to become lifelong readers, learners and leaders. By providing students and faculty with current resources and services, the librarians can enrich and expand the frontiers of learning and teaching. Also, by actively reaching out beyond request for materials and assistance, by anticipating needs and by maintain a high profile of the school, the librarians are active participants of the educational process. The academic libraries of higher education aim for advancement in learning and acquisition of knowledge.

Methodology

There searcher employed a case study research design. This is because a case study allows for a detailed analysis of a situation such as this. The research is an in-depth study to gather information from the respondents on the use of academic libraries among undergraduate students in Madonna University, Okija Library. Faculty of Social Sciences was selected for this study and it has nine (9) functional departments while five (5) out of the nine have a functional departmental library in their various departments and a functional faculty library.

Table one: Response on how often undergraduate students of Madonna University make use of the Academic library.

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentages %
1	Daily	30	15
2	Weekly (at least once in a week)	70	35
3	Monthly (at least once in a month)	20	10
4	Occasionally (anytime they like)	80	40
	TOTAL	200	100

Source: Field survey 2018.

The table above revealed that 80 (40%) respondents visited the library occasionally, 70 (35%) visited the library at least once in a week, 30 (15%) respondents visited the

Total of one thousand five hundred and thirty-seven (1,537) students, made up the population of the social science faculty (Madonna University, 2021). A desired sample size of 200 respondents which presents approximately 13% of the target population of students in the selected faculty from various departments drawn using proportionate stratified random sampling techniques, thus: Sample/ Population = n/N i.e. $200/1537 = 0.13\%$ or 13% Therefore: 13% was used to determine the sample size in each department which make up the faculty. It was used to select respondents from each of the Department to represent the sample due to the large population of students that use the various libraries in the faculty. The population was grouped strata and from this stratum, respondents were randomly selected from the nine (9) departments in the faculty of Social Science. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics the of frequency and percentage and presented tables due to its simplicity of data presentation and conformity with social science research.

Results

Research Questions 1: How often do undergraduate students of Madonna University make use of the Academic library?

library daily and 20 (10%) respondents visited the library on monthly basis.

Research Questions 2: What is the appropriateness of the academic library's available resources?

Table two: Response on the appropriateness of the academic library's available resources

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentages %
5	Very satisfied	63	31.5
6	Satisfied	77	38.5
7	Not very satisfied	55	27.5
8	Never satisfied	5	2.5
	TOTAL	200	100

Source: Field survey 2018.

The response in the Table above shows the appropriateness of the academic library's available resources. From the respondents 63 (31.5%) student respondents indicated that they were very satisfied, 77 (38.5%) student respondents indicated that they were satisfied, 55(27.5%) respondents

indicated that they were not very satisfied and 5(2.5%) respondents indicated that they were never satisfied.

Research Questions 3: What are the problems students face in accessing information from the academic library?

Table three: Response on the problems students face in accessing information from the academic library

S/N	Items	Frequency	Yes%	frequency	No%
9	Poor library staff/user relationship	10	5	190	95
10	Inadequate reference sources	180	90	20	10
11	Lack of adequate ICT services, e.g. (the Internet, email services, etc.	160	80	40	20
12	Erratic power supply	170	85	30	15
13	Lack of current and relevant materials	190	95	10	5
14	Inadequate reading space	20	10	180	90
15	Inadequate staff strength	10	5	190	95

Source: Field survey 2018.

In relation to the problems students face in making use of the academic library, from the responses in the table, 180(90%) respondents indicated in adequate reference sources, 160 (80%) was for lack of adequate ICT services, e.g. (Internet, email services, etc), 170 (85%) indicated erratic power supply and 190 (95%) lack of current and relevant materials. This finding showed that major constraints inhibiting the effective

utilization of library resources are lack of current and relevant material, inadequate reference sources, erratic power supply, lack of adequate ICT services, e.g. (Internet, email services in that order.

Research Questions 4: What are ways through which academic library resources and services can be improved for a better academic experience?

Table four: Response on ways academic library resources and services can be improved for a better Academic experience

S/N	Items	Frequency	Yes%	Frequency	No%
36	Cordial library staff-user relationship	160	80	40	20
37	Adequate reference sources	170	85	30	15
38	Regular power supply	180	90	20	10
39	Availability of current and relevant materials	186	93	14	7
40	Adequate reading space	154	77	46	23
41	Availability of ICT services e.g. Internet, e-mail	160	80	40	20
42	Adequate staff strength	130	65	70	35

Source: Field survey 2018.

Table four revealed the suggestions from respondents on how to improve resources of the library for a better academic experience. 160 (80%) respondents went for cordial relationship between library staff and library users, 170 (85%) respondents suggested adequate reference sources, 180 (90%) respondents suggested regular power supply, 186 (93%) respondents suggested availability of current and relevant materials, 154 (77%) suggested adequate reading space, 160 (80%) suggested availability of ICT services e.g. Internet, e-mail, and 130 (65%) respondents suggested adequate staff strength. This result revealed that majority of the respondents said that the above are ways to ensure improvement of library resources for academic purpose, a few respondents (20%, 15%, 10%, 7%, 23%, 20% and 35%) respectively admitted that the above are not the ways to ensure improvement of library resources for academic purpose. This result revealed that the above are the ways to ensure improvement of library resources.

Discussion of Findings

The result indicated that majority of the respondents visited the library occasionally. This reflected the statement of Amkpa (2016) who stated that many students do not spend more than two hours daily in the library and also that students study without using library materials. In view of this, the use of academic library for academic purposes should be considered a routine exercise and there should be facilities that will enhance frequent access to the academic facilities.

The result obtained, revealed that undergraduate students of Madonna University were satisfied with library services and resources. This shows that the library is living up to the expectations of students and well-equipped to cater for their information needs. This is in line with Okey (2010) who stated that the library is an important academic sector of the university and that a

university is as good as its library. When these library materials are used by the students, their academic performance is improved and the image of the institution is also promoted.

The result obtained, revealed that major problems undergraduate students face in making use of the academic library resources include: lack of current and relevant materials, poor electric power supply, inadequate reference sources among others. These problems are rooted in dwindling budgets due to poor funding of libraries. The library needs money to consistently furnish their collections with current titles and to provide alternative source of power for effective access to e-resources amongst others (Yetunde, 2011).

The result obtained from research question four revealed ways academic library can improve access as: Availability of current and relevant materials, regular power supply, adequate reference sources, and availability of ICT services, cordial library staff-user relationship and adequate staff strength. This is in accordance with the recommendation of Ifidon, (2012) who stated that more emphasis should be placed on the provision of online access and services such as OPAC, e-journals, e-books and networked information services, improvement on ICTS such as the interment, hardware and software as well as internet bandwidth, the need for the Nigeria Library Association to be proactive in the 21st century, improvement on ICT training for academic libraries, the need for the communities of university libraries and their counter parts in polytechnics and colleges to sensitize their respective institutions administrations on the central role of academic libraries in teaching, learning and research activities in academic communities. Hence, if these suggestions are put into consideration, there shall be better access to library resources and services among undergraduate students, thereby enhancing their academic performance.

In summary, data collected provided deep insight to the subject matter. In trying to investigate how often undergraduate students of Madonna University make use of the library. It was clear that majority of the undergraduate students were satisfied with appropriateness of services and resources available in the library. Findings also showed that lack of current and relevant materials, lack of adequate power supply, inadequate reference sources among others are the major problems students face in making use of the academic library. Finally, the findings indicated ways access to academic library resources and services can be improved for a better Academic experience which identified; cordial library staff-user relationship, regular power supply, availability of current and relevant materials, availability of ICT services e.g. Internet, e-mail and adequate staff strength among others.

Conclusion

The study was carried out to investigate how to facilitate access to information by examining academic library use among undergraduates students of social science faculty, Madonna University Nigeria, Okija Campus. Key findings revealed that majority of students make occasional use of the library. Result showed that respondents visited the library mostly to read for test and examination, to browse the internet, consult relevant textbooks and read their lecture notes. The findings revealed that students expressed satisfaction with the cleanliness, lightening, services rendered by staff of the library and the opening hours.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. Students should be allowed to make input in the selection of library resources through the use of the suggestion box provided by the library.
2. The university management should, as a matter of priority, provide alternative

power supply to the library, as that would aid easy accessibility to both physical and e-resources in the library. As a result, students will be satisfied with physical and e-resources as well as lighting system in the library.

3. The library materials (books and non-books) are not adequate in numbers, therefore, there should be aggressive acquisition of books on various programmes available/propose in the university.
4. The federal government through the parent institutions should provide adequate funds for the library for adequate maintenance of available facilities like computers, printers, etc.
5. Lecturers should give assignments to students that will require them to use library resources in the library and the University Librarian should consider organizing a "library week" once in a session to sensitize students on the various resources available in the library and their importance.
6. There is a need for the communities of university librarians and those of them in polytechnics and colleges to create awareness on their roles in teaching, learning and research.
7. More emphasis should be placed on the provision of online access and services such as OPAC, e-journals, e-books and networked information services.
8. ICT facilities should be improved on, such as the Internet, hardware and software as well as internet bandwidth.
9. Nigerian Library Association should be proactive in fund seeking and collaboration with other institutions for resource sharing. They should play the politics in tertiary institutions that will be beneficial to the growth of the library.
10. ICT training for academic librarians should be enhanced.

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