

STUDENTS' PERCEPTION AND UTILIZATION OF SERIAL MATERIALS IN THE POLYTECHNIC IBADAN LIBRARY, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

A survey research, which focused on students' perception and utilization of serial materials in the polytechnic library, Ibadan was conducted. All the students in the polytechnic of Ibadan constituted the population of the study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the sample. A questionnaire dealing with students' perception and utilization of serial materials was administered on 500 students of the polytechnic. Data collected were analyzed mainly with frequency counts and simple percentage. Findings of the study indicate that polytechnic students make use of serial materials occasionally. Majority of the students are fairly satisfied with the serial materials that are available in the library. The paper concluded that the serial materials should be easily accessible to the students so that they will be well disposed towards their usage.

Keywords: Student perception, utilization, serial materials, library

INTRODUCTION

The basic purpose of an academic library is to provide sufficient information for making informed decisions by users. Academic libraries normally provide for educational needs of students, to support the teaching staff in their teaching role and provide for research activities of both the students and teaching staff. The academic library collections must reflect the subject interests of the institutions. It must also be adequate in terms of quality, quantity and variety. The library does this through useful selection and acquisition of materials for teaching learning and research; process and organization of the materials for easy retrieval; and dissemination of information about the collections and encourages their active exploitation.

The explosion of knowledge and publications of all kinds, conventional or non-conventional, means the universe of materials has grown much larger. One very important set of library materials in the library is serials. A serial is a publication in any medium issued in successive parts and intended to be continued indefinitely. This definition includes periodicals, newspapers, annuals (reports, yearbooks directories, etc., journals, and memoirs proceedings, transactions of societies, monographic series, and unnumbered series. The Anglo American cataloguing rules (1988) define serial as a 'continuing resource issued in a succession of discrete parts usually bearing numbering that has no predetermined conclusion for example, print and electronics journal, magazines, continuing directories, annual reports, newspapers and monographic serves'.

Aina (2004) also describes serial as a distinctive title which is issued in parts, and each issue is published indefinitely. It includes periodicals, journals, newsletters, newspapers and magazines, etc. A periodical such as newspaper or magazine has a distinctive title and is issued more frequently than once a year containing articles. While non - periodical serials are publications that are issued in successive parts once a year or less frequently, yearbooks annuals or monographic series are examples of non-periodical serials. The term periodicals, Serials, Journals are used interchangeably to refer to the group of library materials which appear in a series at regular intervals. Fayose (1995) stated that as its name suggest, a periodical is a distinctive title which is issued at regular intervals: weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly by a learned society, an academic or research institution, a professional body, or a reputable publishing organization. Periodicals are useful because they are the most up to date resources in the library. The articles in periodicals are often written by experts in the field, therefore they are reliable. The article are precise and to the point thus not as cumbersome to read as textbooks.

Serial connotes the idea of subdivisions that make a whole. It is a concept of instilment maturity. The idea of serialization is not limited to printed materials. When printed document are referred to as serial, an idea of publications that is consecutively number and indefinitely continued is in place. In her own view Agbaje (2002) submitted that periodicals are type of serial organized around the concept of preordination which attempts to impart significances to the passage of time by identifying and ordering information along chronological sequences. Thus when product are referred to as periodical they are produced at fixed internal of time, usually not less than twenty-four hours. Serial material is used by all in our lives for different purposes. The important of serial materials to the library cannot be over emphasized. Special and academic libraries devote a lot of their funds to the acquisition and management of serials. This is because a lot of research works go on in their parent organization. Titles in serials of academic nature are written and reviewed by experts.

Aiyepetu (1988) revealed the importance of newspaper as one of the types of serial material. In his study on information utilization by policy makers, 84% of the policy makers consulted newspaper and magazines and this ranked among the five most consulted information sources utilized by policy-makers in Nigerian. Olorunsola (1997) posited that it helps students, researcher and faculty to be well-informed about current events. In order that lectures in the Polytechnics would keep abreast of the latest progress in their individual fields, they need serial materials. If the Polytechnic library is to meet its obligations of providing effective resources then sourcing and making sure that lectures and students have access to serial materials is mandatory.

The Polytechnic libraries should not be contended with acquisition, organization and preservation of the collection but the effectiveness of the resources by collaboration with faculty members in their teaching and research activities. The polytechnic Ibadan library subscribes to seven daily newspapers. These include, The

Guardian, Nigerian Tribune, Punch, Sun, Nation, Vanguard and complete sport newspaper. All newspapers that come into the library are indexed while emphasis is placed on education, politics, crime, personality profile, health, agriculture and money watches. This is to enable easy access to such materials by clientele in accordance to their area of interest.

The library also subscribe to the weekly magazines namely. Tell, Newswatch and Business eye. While some government and non-government organization do send their magazines to the library free of charge. The Polytechnic Ibadan library acquired journals that cover all the course of study in the five faculties of the institution. While newsletter, conference proceedings, annuals, bulletin and book of abstract were donated by parent bodies such as OPEC bulletin, OPEC newsletter, first bank annuals among others. Ibadan Polytechnic library has a special reading space that can contain a total number of fifty readers at once for the sole purpose of reading newspapers and other serial materials, since they are not allowed to take it out of the library.

METHODOLOGY

The survey method has been found to be the most appropriate for the study which focused on the students' perception and utilization of the serial materials. A total of five hundred (500) respondents were randomly selected for this study. Data were collected from the selected students using questionnaire as the main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was designed to identify the important variables to be measured. These included access to serial materials, utilization of the serial materials and students rating of library on serial collections. It was also designed to elicit some other views relevant to the study. Copies of the questionnaire were distributed and collected across all the five faculties of the Polytechnic Ibadan namely: Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Environmental Studies, Faculty of Financial Management Science and Faculty of Business and Communication Science. The return rate was 488, representing 97.6% of the total number of respondents selected. To determine the number of respondents that gave the various responses, a frequency count had to be taken. The frequency of these responses was converted to percentage.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The distribution of the Polytechnic, Ibadan students who participated in the study is shown on the table 1 above. However, the findings indicate that a high proportion of male users use the serial material than the female users, this could be attributed to the fact that more male students visit the serial section to read newspapers, journals and other types of serial publication than female students. The presentation on table 2 is on the use of library materials. All the students, at one time or the other used library materials. But a majority of them used textbooks, a few of the respondents used reference materials and grey literature; more than 20% used serial materials. Most students indicated using serial materials either often or occasionally. This was

based on the fact that a large percentage used the Polytechnic library occasionally. If they do not see the importance of relying on the library for materials, then it was unlikely they rely on it for access to serial materials. Most of the students rely on their lecture note.

Most students indicated using serial materials either often or occasionally. This was based on the fact that a large percentage used The Polytechnic library occasionally. The students used the serial materials more for their research work and examination purposes. Osunrinade (2007) confirms that Nigerians have poor reading cultures and they used the library mostly for achievement reading. One can deduce from this study that undergraduates in our tertiary institutions engage in utilitarian reading, because the society places emphasis on paper qualification; thus, they engage in serious reading when they have examination or research work to carry out. The question was aimed at deriving the rate or degree at which students in tertiary institution make use of the listed serial materials in the library. The study found that newspapers were used more regularly than others. More students indicated that they have never used annuals and newsletters. Magazines, Journals and newspaper were used occasionally as seen on table 4. The largest percentage of the total respondents has never consulted newsletters and annuals. This could be due to the fact that newsletters and annuals were mostly internal publications of government, non-governmental organizations, industry etc. and not much relevance to their research.

The study indicated that a large number of the lecturers only occasionally refer their students to serial materials. In rating the performance of the Polytechnic libraries on collection of serial materials in their subject areas and generally for learning and research, a low percentage of the students found them satisfactory. While 39.5% of the total respondents rated the library poor and unsatisfactory on collection for serial materials to meet their needs for learning and research. The fact that students found the library's performance on serial collections fairly satisfactory could be responsible for their low usage. As earlier reported in the study (Samgowus; 2004).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings in this study, it is possible to infer that students in tertiary institution are aware of the existence of serial section in the library but only fail to utilize the serial materials to its fullest. It was discovered that good reading habit has not been formed among students. This resulted to the low usage of library by the students. The students also rated the library performance on serial materials fairly satisfactory which indicated that the library still needs to improve on their current performance in order to satisfy the needs of the students.

For the library to manage the serial materials well, they need more funding, material resources and commitment on the part of the library. They also need to make the serial materials easily accessible to the students so that they will be well disposed towards its usage in order to enhance their academic performance. The library should also be more involved in cooperative activities with other libraries.

Finally, to encourage reading habit in the students, the library environment must be adequately equipped with basic equipment such as air conditioners; adequate power supply; recruiting library staff who are student friendly without losing sight on the ethics of their job.

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Table 1: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Faculties	Frequency	Percentage
Engineering	97	19.9
Science	98	20.1
Environmental studies	99	20.2
Fin. Management Science	97	19.9
Business and Comm. Science	97	19.9
Gender		
Male	287	58.8
Female	201	41.2

Source: Survey, 2009

Table 2 : Use of library materials

Description	Responses	Percentage response
Reference materials	29	5.9
Text books	31	64.8
Grey literature	22	4.5
Journal, Newspaper, Serial, Magazine, Newsletter	108	22.1
No response	13	2.7
Total	488	100

Source: 2009 Survey

Table 3: Utilization of serial materials by students

Description	Responses	% response
Relevance on Library:		
Wholly	42	8.6
Partly	393	80.6
Not at all	53	10.8
Use of serial material:		
Always	38	7.8
Often	109	22.4
Occasionally	312	63.9
Never	29	5.9
Nature of Use:		
Leisure	104	21.3
Assignment/Exam purpose	121	24.8
Research	246	50.4
Unclassified	17	3.5
Total	488	100

Source: Survey 2009

Table 4: Frequency of used of serial materials in the library

Description	Regularly		Occasionally		Never		Total	Total
	Resp	%	Resp.	%	Resp.	%		
Journal	48	9.8	227	46.5	213	43.7	488	100
Newspapers	143	43.2	211	29.3	32	6.6	488	100
Magazines	47	9.6	255	52.3	186	38.1	488	100
Newsletter	15	3.1	97	19.9	376	77	488	100
Annuals	4	0.8	81	16.6	403	82.6	488	100
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: Survey, 2009

Table 5: Students' rating of library on serial materials

Description	Responses	%
Respondents rating of serial materials in subject area:		
Very Good	13	2.7
Good	54	11.1
Fair	228	46.7
Poor	103	39.5
Total	488	100
Respondents rating of the library in terms of collection of serial materials for learning and research		
Satisfactory	46	9.4
Fairly satisfactory	294	60.3
Unsatisfactory	148	30.3
Total	488	100

Source: Survey 2009