

## **THE NEED FOR A FUNCTIONAL LIBRARY INSTRUCTION PROGRAMME IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Library use education is the most neglected aspect of service of some Nigerian libraries, especially the Colleges of Education Libraries. This study examined the importance of library use instruction programme and the problems often associated with its implementation in Nigeria. This discovered that tours, manuals, guides, directories, orientations and invitational lectures are all helpful but none of these begins to do the job that accredited course of library instruction can do. Hence, departmental lectures should cast a bright reflection of library use on their students were among the prominent recommendations made.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Library use instruction has become an important component in the education of today's Nigerian Certificate of Education holders. There is not only a definite trend towards more independent student-teachers but a growing need for continuing education beyond one's formal learning. The present day Nigeria society has changed. It is now characterized more by change than constancy; the college library must endeavour to help students develop attitudes and skills that will enable them adapt to change in order to function practically and creatively as teachers. The philosophy of librarianship is based on the concept of service and to this:

*the professional librarian continues to struggle to collect and organize printed and other forms of recorded knowledge in order to satisfy both the present and future users. Library users are important in the context of library service. And since they are raison d'etre for library, maximum effort (library instruction) should be made to ensure library users derive the utmost possible benefit from the service (Unomah, 1986).*

Good college library service develops in the student life-long library habit, so that they will use their college and public libraries intelligently for their own benefit, advancement and pleasure. The ability to search for and retrieve information is one of the competencies of an educated person. Instruction in these skills must systematically and functionally reach all students before their graduation from the college as teachers or they will be at a disadvantage when entering the university. Library instruction, therefore, is a programme that encourages self-realization and academic growth.

According to Ikem (1981), without the development of library use skills and positive attitude towards library, the students are likely to use and re-use only a maximum number of library resources in the midst of the information universe. He

pointed out further that knowledge of the techniques and skills of judging and using the ever-increasing corpus of knowledge is essential for long-life self-education. As an integral part of the evolving Nigerian Certificate of Education (N.C.E) curriculum, library use instruction should be designed to stimulate, encourage and develop in the individual student the learning abilities. The need to make it functional, therefore, is imperative.

### **ORIGIN OF LIBRARY INSTRUCTION IN COLLEGE LIBRARIES**

The origin of library instruction can be traced back to more than 2000 years ago. The earliest evidence of instruction - a librarian lecturing the undergraduate was found at Harvard College in the 1820's (Miller, 1992). Most early academic librarians were professors with part-time library appointment who taught the use of libraries for academic purpose. Library lecture was chosen as their form of instruction by such institutions as Harvard, Indiana and Columbia Universities. Separate courses were implemented in the 1880's by Ray Davis at the University of Michigan, Azariah Root at Oberlin College. Over the next few years about seventeen institutions in the U.S.A alone adopted the instruction lecture as course. In the 1900's the library use instruction reappeared. According to Adam (1979) William Bishop and Fredrick Poole are said to have expostulated the concepts of library use instruction that are valid today and copied by many institutions.

In recent years, however, it has become the subject of much activity and concern, especially in academic libraries. The names of Liou Shores, Patricia Knapp and Thomas Kirk along with those of undergraduate colleges like Montieth, Earlham, Swarthone, Hampshire and Wabash are recorded as landmarks in the annals of library instruction. According to Knapp (1986) her insight and observation allowed academic librarians to move beyond the freshman orientation of 1940's and 1950's and to begin studying complex library skills and attitudes of students. Much of this renewed interest can be traced to the pioneering efforts of Patricia Knapp at Montieth College. In Nigeria, according to Nwoye and Anafulu (1973) and (1991) instructing undergraduates in the use of library commenced at University of Nigeria, Nsukka in 1972. This was a formal library use course incorporated in "The use of English" without a credit load.. This was however after Kashim library, ABU, introduced an optimal and elective course in library instruction in 1964. Other universities, like OAU, Unilorin, and Port Harcourt etc. followed the UNN example. Since then the programme spread to other institutions and most recently colleges of Education.

### **THE NEED FOR FUNCTIONAL APPROACH IN LIBRARY INSTRUCTION IN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION**

Early attempts to explain why library instruction was necessary were based on the beliefs that to know how to use the library was an essential part of education for life and to prepare students for the continuing process of self - education. Dudley (1972)

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positioned that librarians seem to agree about the college student and the library. The consensus is that:

- (a) undergraduate or college students do not know how to use the library
- (b) they should know how to use library and
- (c) They are not receiving effective instruction on how to use the library.

Tours, manuals, guides, directories, orientation and invitational lectures are all helpful but none of these begins to do the job that the accredited course of library instruction can do. This course is therefore required by all students as it holds the most promise for reaching a large number of the students. Mews (1971) is confident that a belief in the value of library instruction is almost an article of faith among British academic Librarians. Library instruction is seen as an overall operation and much effort has been put into the consolidation of the programme over the past years.

This was caused by the general dissatisfactions with the past form of library orientation programme as more Librarians become aware that the first contact with the library should be concerned with the creation of attitude towards the library rather than imparting information about the library, creating an atmosphere of friendliness, helpfulness and awareness of the role of the library (Stevenson, 1977). It has been said that one trying to remember everything he has learned. It is also recognized that the ability to use information is extremely important in today's society and will continue to become more so. Recognizing the importance and need of library instruction, Boyer (1987) stated that:

*the college library must be viewed as a vital part of the undergraduate experience... the library staff should be considered as important to teaching as are classrooms. We recommend that undergraduate students be introduced to the range of resources... students should be given bibliographic instruction on campus to spend at least a little proportion of their time in the library using its wide range of resources as they spend in class (p 65).*

Miller (1973) asserted that the concept of bibliographic instruction appears to be one of the greatest success stories of modern American academic librarianship. This is because it is considered that the ability to search and retrieve information is one of the competencies of an educational person. So instruction in these skills must systematically and efficiently reach all students before their graduation. According to Nwoye and Anafulu (1973) the present shift of emphasis in higher education from complete reliance on the lecture to increasing independent study implies that every student is expected to be able to consult authorities and compare results. If the student can successfully complete an academic programme by reading the prescribed texts, attending lectures and passing the N.C.E examination based on the texts and lectures, there is little stimulus for him to build competence in research and research tools. In designing a course of library instruction, it is necessary to see that the grade aimed at really do coincide with those of the library users. It is only in this way that students after completing library instruction will be able to make efficient

and effective use of available library resources and personnel in identification and procurement of library materials to meet their broad and varying information need.

### **PROBLEMS OF LIBRARY INSTRUCTION IN NIGERIA**

In Nigeria, it would appear that while there is a growing awareness about the importance of library use instruction programme, many still do not evaluate their programmes towards making them functional. This is in agreement with Nzotto (1986) who notes that user education is the most neglected aspect of service in most Nigeria libraries, especially academic and school libraries. It is surprising that the proportion of library clientele, even among university staff and students do not know how to make proper use of the library.

Furthermore, most students do not know how to use the library. Some can not efficiently handle the simplest bibliographical task they need to accomplish so long as the librarians view their primary mission as that of acquirers and organizers of knowledge; such students' ignorance is sad but unchanging reality (Sugranes and Neal, 1983). Obokoh (1985) is convinced that the lecture period has been found to be grossly inadequate as it is too short to instruct meaningfully. Added to this is the fact that the student's population is usually made up of students with various library backgrounds, which to a large extent is the result of various social, economic, environmental and educational backgrounds. Experience has shown that there are differences of interest during the lecture, for some students show more interest while others do not. This poses a problem for the functionality of the programme.

Clark (1960) observes that librarians have recognized that in teaching students they have been teaching the wrong people. The responsibility of student's library habit belongs to the various lecturers and teaching departments. Students department play a more decisive role in determining students' library use habit that the librarian would like to admit. This is because the students' success in locating information and their joy in reading depend increasingly upon their directing lecturers. Although, the lecturers can encourage and suggest, it still remains within the lecturers' province to integrate the classroom work with the library and most lecturers are not choosing to integrate. Furthermore, Clark notes that evidence showed that most lecturers use extremely low proportion of library resources. Therefore, it would appear that the root of this problem lies within the realm of the lecturers.

Perkin (1965) reiterates that the students have been confronted with teachers from kindergarten through college who have had a minimal conception of the library. The student reflects the teacher he has had in his educational career and those teacher cast no bright reflection toward library use and understanding. In most colleges of Education in Nigeria, library instruction is often equated with library orientation and as a result other components of the instruction are usually neglected. Accordingly, the problems can be summarized as follows: (a) The programme is taught by personnel not interested in libraries; (b) The huge number of students involved which does not allow room for Practical in the library; (c) Lack of trained personnel to teach the

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programme; and (d) Lack of interest and commitment on the part of the students (Perkin, 1965).

Added to the above problems, Obokoh (1985) observed that routine lectures of library instruction are scheduled in the lecture time-table by people other than the librarian. Library instruction should commence at the time the librarian's schedule permits. This will provide him the time to motivate his students, create immediate and lasting impact which will automatically lead the students to learn more on how to use the library and develop an enduring culture. It is clear that the general instruction in library use requires that cooperation of academic staff in determining goals, methods, evaluation and participation is vital for necessary motivation on the part of the participant. This may be the only way to ensure success and effectiveness of such a programme.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Awareness of the library and its resources can only be made through education. Library instruction has therefore become an in-thing in most colleges of Education libraries there is need to make it functional. Unless, the students develop the necessary skills on how to use the library effectively, they will not be able to benefit maximally from using the college library which is the foundation of modern educational structure. There is no habit that is acquired in College that is likely to be more lasting than the habit of reading and ability to use books for self-education and information. In view of the far-reaching effects of lack of knowledge and interest on the use of libraries by our student - teachers, the following recommendations are made:

- (i) The N.C.E Minimum Standard should be revised. All the years of N.C.E programme should be made to offer library use related course in the Department of General Studies. GSE 110 - Introduction to Library Studies offered in N.C.E year 1 is not broad and enough.
- (ii) Academic Librarians in our colleges of Education should see themselves as stakeholders in the training of N.C.E teachers and how well after graduation these teachers will make use of the library meaningfully. They should work as a team in determining the goals, methods of teaching and the type of evaluation that will yield and the necessary information for motivation and revision.
- (iii) The use of the library as an instruction programme should not terminate in the classroom. It should be extended beyond the immediate classroom environment so that the students will have the opportunity of seeing what is being taught in the classroom practically in the library.
- (iv) In the course of library lecture, a multimedia approach, incorporating a high level of student's activity should be used. This will enhance greater understanding and also sustain their interest during lecture.
- (v) Departmental lecturers should cast a bright reflection of library use on their students. They should de-emphasize the use of handouts and encourage the

- students to inculcate the essence of good reading habits and use of libraries. This will go a long way to reawaken the dead reading habits among our student-teachers.
- (vi) Those involved in the instructional effort of library use should embark on periodic and regular evaluation of the programme, so that a wealth of knowledge concerning students; knowledge, skills, opinions and attitudes - all of which are necessary for the development of an effective library instruction will be made for the modification of the programme

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