

## Effective Use of Library Resources: A Case Study of Business Students of Koforidua Polytechnic, Ghana

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### Abstract

The study presents evaluation of students' utilization of Koforidua Polytechnic library information resources. 3,120 copies of the research questionnaire were administered to registered Business Studies student of the institution. A total of 3000 were retrieved representing 96.1% return rate. Findings indicated that 82.0% of the respondents are aware of the availability of library resources; 58.6% make effective use of the resources, while 61.4% had difficulty retrieving materials from shelves. The study also revealed that 63.3% of the respondents visit the library to read lecture notes while 57.3% do not use the library resources because they depend on lectures notes. There is need for information literacy course-to be included in the curriculum of the institution that would expose students to the library information resources as well as help to students to cultivate the habit of library use for long life learning.

**Keywords:** key words, Academic Libraries, Library Use, Business Information, Information Literacy, Library Resources

### 1. Introduction

Education greatly contributes to Nation's socio-economic development and is a powerful tool for change. Schiller, (2008) sees education as an investment in human capital that produces returns to individual in the form of higher earnings and social returns. It should be noted that the training of the cream of the human capital of a country takes place in academic institutions such as universities, polytechnics, colleges and their affiliates. This is because higher education institutions have been known to play a central role in developing knowledge base of individuals, societies and organizations. Information provision and management are crucial to development at all levels. It is accepted that information is knowledge and knowledge is power and those who have it will always be ahead of those who do not have it. Information can only be provided when it exists but when information has not been properly packaged and stored, it cannot be made available. The creation of libraries is informed a means to ensure quality access to information (Bannerman, 2007).

Informed library users know that libraries have resources that are more comprehensive and scholarly relative to cybercafés. Libraries provide access to scholarly literature to users. Often, it is at school, that users become aware of libraries resources, usually while having to write research papers. Students may not have been exposed to library resources, or may not be aware of which resources a library might have so that they can make use of them, which may be partly blamed on faculty staff or library staff (Waldman, 2003).

It is therefore paramount for librarians or information officers to provide up-to-date comprehensive library and information service needed to satisfy the information required by users. Provision of information needs of information seekers must depend on the perceived behaviour of the users in order to provide the necessary information services. For meaningful information to be provided, relevant sources must be consulted. It is only through such sources that individual information seekers can obtain information that is ideal to increase productivity (Bannerman, 2007). Library holdings over the years have so much changed that varieties of information resources that effectively communicates and educate user have evolved. Enhanced resources in libraries now include materials include journals, magazines, manuscripts, newspapers, pamphlets, and computers, audio and visual materials. Librarians are responsible for gathering, selecting, organizing, disseminating and preserving recorded knowledge and information in all forms and for providing assistance and instruction in their use. Books, have been described as channels of civilization and without which history may be-silent, literature dumb, science crippled, thought and speculation at a standstill (Bannerman 2009).1

Libraries tend to facilitate communication between persons either in the present or from others in the past to someone in the present or from someone in the present to someone in the future. Thus, Librarians collect current materials so that those of us alive at this moment may communicate with one another. The studies by Badu (1999), Waldman and Kumar (2003) focused on uses and availability of library resource, while the study carried out by Hussain & Kumar (2006), Adeninan (2011) and Larson & Owusu-Acheaw (2013) examined-user

satisfaction. All the previous studies were limited to the universities. Therefore this study is directed at effective use of library resources among business students in a Ghana Polytechnic (Koforidua Polytechnic).

## 2.Problem Statement

Academic libraries are citadel of academic excellence, established to facilitate learning, teaching research, scholarship and knowledge dissemination. Critical use of information resources is fundamental to higher education. Informed library users know that libraries have resources that are more comprehensive and scholarly than other sources such as the cyber. Students not well exposed to library resources may not be aware of resources a library have or how to make use of them. This, partly, may be because the faculty staff, or library staff failed to inform them of the resources available in the library which in turn may affect the students' academic works or performances. The holdings of libraries have changed so much through the years. Today's libraries house many books and a wider variety of other information materials. Even though the library has resources and organize library orientation to make known the resources available in the library, it appears students do not make maxima utilization of available library resources. This, perhaps may be attributed to the wrong students' perception that library lack material s that meets their needs. This may in turn have overriding effect on effective of library and unsatisfactorily impact on the desired aim, services and uses of the library. Therefore, this study would explore the extent to which business students utilize the resources in the library for their information needs and long life learning. The Business students are the focus population, as the group constitute sixty percent of the total student population.

## 3.Objectives of Study

The main focus of the study was to assess the effective use of library resources by business students of Koforidua Polytechnic in Ghana. The specific objectives underlying the study are as follows

- To examine if the library has materials for students use
- To examine whether students are aware of the resources available at the library
- To examine why students use the library
- To examine the effective use of library resources by students

## 4.Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- Does the library have materials for students use?
- Are students aware of the resources at the library?
- Why do students make use of the library?
- Do students make maxima use of the available library resources?

## 5.Literature Review

According to Kwon (2008) critical use of information resources in the library is crucial in higher education. Therefore, higher institutions should stress on students' abilities to use libraries and information resources critically. With the new generation of computer literate students and the vast amount of information available in both print and electronic formats, the necessity to develop the ability to use information resources in the library is paramount. Consequently, academic libraries assume a far greater role in assisting students to locate and evaluate information critically. Indeed, the search for information involves critical thinking. In the opinion of Kwon (2008) due to the importance of analytical and systematic thinking skills in using libraries, critical thinking has been of interest to both information literacy instructors and library and information professionals. The critical use of academic library resource is important for college students to achieve high academic performance. Information seeking often involves critical thinking in identifying and evaluating relevant resources from a myriad of information sources and databases.

In the view of Waldma (2003), students' library use assumes that the more an undergraduate uses the library, the more familiar the student will be with its resources. However, if students use the library primarily as a quiet and convenient place to study, they may not be aware of its resources at all, as well as to the student who never puts a foot in the library. According to Asamoah-Hanssan (2008), the underlying factor of any nation's development is instructive knowledge in all aspects of life. Also, if knowledge is not harnessed, it is no knowledge. It is the library which collects, organizes and preserves knowledge and makes such knowledge available as and when needed. Libraries and the information that they provide constitute the building blocks of national development.

In the study on information needs of students, Kumar (2009), found that most users visit the library to borrow books, study, and search for information or reading. The purpose of their visits depends on time available and needs. According to Kumar, most users depend on publisher's catalogues, bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, or book reviews to keep current in their area of study. Internet, e-journals or CD-ROMS are used less often due to

the lack of availability of these resources as well as personal skill to use them. In their research, Hussain and Kumar (2006), also reported that majority of the students used the library to borrow books or other materials; others preferred the print collection over the electronic collection. In his study as to how effective students use library resources, McCarthy (1995) concluded that if students are to improve their effectiveness, they need more instruction in information literacy to become more skilled in using library resources. Again, he said for students to be more effective in the use of library resources, the library must assess its current reference services and instruction programme in the light of students' curriculum needs and skills.

Badu (1999), also articulated the same view in his survey of the "Information Seeking Habit of Graduate Students in the University of Ghana". According to him, there is a low level of understanding of the library and less use is made of bibliographic tools. He concluded that the content and duration of the orientation programme organized by the Library at the beginning of the academic year and the lack of knowledge of the library concept and low utilization of the library's resources by the students show that the programme, as it is pursued is a waste of time. He believes that to make the programme more useful and have the needed impact, the user education programme should be integrate into the with the official university curriculum as obtained in some other universities in the country.

Ugwuanyi, Okwor and Ezeji (2011) stated that the abundance of information resources provided by libraries makes them a potential learning environment. While, Popoola (2008), affirmed that the information resources and services available in institutional information systems must be capable of supporting research activities among the students and faculty members. Similarly, Iyoro (2004) identified accessibility as one of the pre-requisites of information use. It is accepted that the effectiveness of libraries is often measured by the volume of library materials to clients, the amount of use of the resources and the apparent satisfaction of clients. (Simmonds and Andaleeb, 2001).

## 6. Methodology

The survey was a cross-sectional study limited to business students. It was limited to only Higher National Diploma (HND) business students of Koforidua Polytechnic, Ghana. The business programmes covered Accountancy, Marketing, Purchasing and Supply as well as Management and Secretaryship. The study focuses mainly on levels (100 to 300 level) business students only as the business courses in the Polytechnic attract more students than science and engineering. In addition, books and other materials under these courses are always available on the market and cheaper than the science and engineering books.

The questionnaire was administered during the lecture hours of 2012/2013 academic year. Out of the total number of three thousand one hundred and twenty copies of questionnaires distributed three thousand were retrieved representing 96.1% which was very much representative of the sample. After the collection of the data the results were analyzed with the use of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Quantitative method of data collection was employed. The total population of the institution was five thousand and two hundred as at the time of the study. Out of the total population, three thousand one hundred and two constituting 60% were business students who were considered for the study. Stratified sampling technique was adopted to sample the respondents. This was based on the recommendation of Watson's(2001) , sample size calculation, which proposed that for a total population of 3000 to 15000 and above with 5% margin of error, a sample size of three hundred and eighty and above from each stratum is acceptable.

**Table 1 Population of the study**

Departments	Number of Students	No Received	Percentage Responses per discipline
Accountancy	1011	1000	33.3
Marketing	992	914	30.4
Purchasing and Supply	886	870	29
Secretaryship and Management Studies	231	216	7.3
Total	3120	3000	100

Source: Field Survey, 2012

## 7. Discussion

Out of three thousand one hundred and twenty copies of the questionnaire retrieved, one thousand respondents representing 33.4% came from Accountancy Department, nine hundred and fourteen representing 30.4% from Marketing Department, eight hundred and seventy representing 29% came from Purchasing and Supply Department, while two hundred and nineteen representing 7.2% came from Secretariship and Management Studies Department (Table 1).

A modern library is regarded as a service institution which aims at enabling the users to make the most effective

and efficient use of the resources (Kumar , 2009). In line with this, library orientation is another way of providing easy access to information in the library. Library orientations enable students to know what the library has to offer to users. Again library orientation is meant to re-educate users on the organization of materials on the shelves and to teach users how to retrieve information both manually and electronically (Owusu-Acheaw, 2007).

When respondents were asked whether the library do organize orientation, two thousand six hundred and forty of the respondents, representing 88.0% answered in the affirmative, while one thousand three hundred and fifty-nine respondents representing 12.0 % answered in the negative. With a follow up question, on whether they have participated in any library orientation, the revelation was that 67.22% have had the chance to partake in an orientation as against 32.78% who had not. This meant that library has been organizing library orientation, and a significant number of students do participate. However to ensure optimal participation in library orientation by students means that, apart from the usual yearly orientation organized by the libraries, occasional information literacy training for students should be organized to expose students to the resources in the library.

**Table 2 Retrieval of books from shelves**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Going straight to the shelve to pick the book	1160	38.6
Going through several shelves to identify the book wanted	800	26.6
Asking the library staff to find the book for me	820	27.3
Asking a friend to find the book for me	220	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3000</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field study, 2012

Respondents were asked how they retrieve books from the shelves. One thousand one hundred and sixty respondents representing 38.6 % indicated they go straight to the shelves to pick a book. Eight hundred respondents representing 26.6% go through several shelves before they could pick a book. Eight hundred and twenty respondents representing 27.3% sought assistance from the library staff before they could pick a book while two hundred and twenty two respondents representing 7.4% said friends help them to pick books. From Table 2, it is clear that, a total number of one thousand nine hundred and two respondents representing 61.4% find difficulty to pick a book from the shelves. When probed further whether their inability to retrieve books from the shelves affect their use of library resources, all the respondents said yes. The study revealed that though 67.2% of the respondents make themselves available for library orientation yet 61.4% of the same respondents find it difficult to pick a book from the shelves. The implication is that perhaps students do not benefit from library orientation given to them. This corroborates the view of McCarthy (1995) and Badu (1999), who stress the need for students to be given more instruction on information literacy. Perhaps, this is the category of respondents who do not attend library orientation. The implication is that this category of students may lack the skills to use the catalogues. Perhaps the latter category of students might not have been familiar with the library classification system to enable them select books from the shelves or staff of the library are not proactive in providing direct assistance to users. The available serials materials in the library-include newspapers, magazines, and journals. Serials are accorded prominence in the library because they provide the latest information to clients.

**Table 3 Provision of Journals in the Library**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Africa Inside	1000	32.23
Sales Journal	210	6.76
Bank of Ghana Journal	406	13.08
National Geographic Journal	218	7.02
UN and ECOWAS Journal	414	13.34
Purchasing and Supply Journal	354	20.5
News papers	218	7.02
<b>Total</b>	<b>3000</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field study, 2012

The research also explored whether respondents really knew the actual journals that are available in the Library, so a follow up question was asked. The answers given by the respondents indicated that though respondents admit that they know about the availability of journals in the library, however, some of the respondents do not know the names of the journals in the Library. The respondents gave several names such as *Africa Inside*, *Sales Journal* and *Bank of Ghana Journal* to be journals. But these are not journals, but rather students coined names which to them, are journals. When the named titles were cross-checked with the library holdings, only two of titles were available in the Library. These are *Sales Journal* and *Purchasing and Supply Journal*.

**Table 4 Provision of Magazines in the Library**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
School magazines	1900	63.3
American magazines	212	7.2
The Africa Self Woman	108	3.6
News magazines	80	2.6
Focus in Africa	142	4.7
Africa Agenda	558	18.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>3000</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field study, 2012

A follow-up question to respondents was to require them to mention examples each of magazines that are

available at the Library. Table 4 above showed that though the students are aware of these magazines in the Library they do not know the exact names of their titles. This is because all the names except two given by the respondents do not correspond with the actual names of the magazines in the Library. The only two exceptions are “Africa Agenda” and “Focus on Africa”.

Both Tables 3 and 4 indicate that though respondents know the availability of journals and magazines, they were unable to name them. It further indicates that, majority of the students do not utilize the library resources fully, because if they have, they would have been able to name them accurately. Perhaps their inability to name them correctly stems from the fact that faculty staffs have not exposed them to such resources in the Library or the Library staff has not marketed such resources to the students.

Encyclopedias are important sources to consider when initially researching on a topic. They provide basic information on a wide range of subjects in an easily read and understandable format. Using an encyclopedia is an effective way to quickly get a broad overview of a subject and it is a good source to consult for background information on a chosen subject area (Brown, 2006). The study revealed that, two thousand five hundred and four respondents representing 83.5% claimed knowing the importance and the use of encyclopedia, while four hundred and ninety six respondents representing 16.5 % said otherwise. A follow up question on the location of encyclopedias in the Library revealed that two thousand one hundred and two respondents representing 70.0% did not know where to locate encyclopedias whilst eight hundred and ninety-eight respondents representing 29.9 % knew where to locate the encyclopedias in the Library. The above analysis indicates that though majority of the respondents know the importance of using encyclopedias, they do not know where they are located. The writer can say that the encyclopedias were placed before the stark area visible and easy to locate. What the writer can deduce is that though majority of respondents know the importance and the use of encyclopedias, they have not bothered to find out where they are located in the Library. This is a further indication of students’ non effective utilization of resources in the Library. However, the Library should emphasize the use of encyclopedias in all Library orientation and encourage students to use them especially when they are given assignments. Nevertheless, the Library should display encyclopedias at vantage points to attract students to consult and use them.

**Table 5 Availability of recommended textbooks**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not available	198	6.6
Available	2,460	82.0
Not sure	342	11.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>3000</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field study, 2012

List of recommended titles are provided by the faculty staff to the library to be purchased for students’ use. The titles are purchased by the Library, processed, classified and catalogued and made available to both the faculty staff and students. Such books are first placed on new arrival stand in Library for some time later transferred to the “Reserve Collection” normally behind the Issue desk. A copy of the list is pasted in front of the Library or inside the Library to inform users of the acquisition of such resources.

Respondents were asked to list a maximum of five recommended titles in their course areas and indicate whether they are available or not in the Library. The aim was to ascertain whether respondents are really conversant with the holdings of the Library. The results indicated that 6.6 % listed two titles and indicated that the books were not available in the Library. On the other hand, 80.0% listed four titles and affirmed that the books were available. The third group consisting 11.4 % also listed five titles and said they were not sure whether the books are available or not.

When the writers cross checked with the information provided by the first group who listed two titles, all the titles were available in the Library. The second group who listed four titles and said that the books were available in the Library was confirmed. The third group who listed five books and were not sure of them, three out of the five books were available in the Library. Though majority of the students indicated that the books were available and the writer confirmed it, it is important that the Library liaise with the faculty staff to provide students with the needed information toward full utilization of Library resources.

**Table 6 Use of library by Students**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
To Learn/Read Lecture Notes	1900	63.3
To Conduct Research	288	9.6
In Response to Assessment Given	530	17.6
To Borrow and Return a Books	282	9.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3000</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field study, 2012

When respondents were asked why they visit the Library, as shown in Table 6, 63.3% of the respondents said they visit the library to learn or read lecture notes while 9.6 % affirm that they visit the Library to conduct research. On the other hand, 17.6% said they visit the Library to do their assignment as against 9.5% who said they visit the library to borrow or return books. This was in line with the findings of Kumar (2009), who brought to bear that most students visit the library mainly to read. It is also not different from the revelation indicated in Waldman's (2003) survey on the use of Library resources by students. The conclusion that could be drawn was that, most of the respondents use the Library as a learning centre and not as a research center.

**Table 7 Limited Library Use by Students**

Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
In adequate Books	1000	30.1
Depend on Lecturers Hand Out/Pamphlets	1600	57.1
Are not encouraged to use t the library	282	9.5
Size of the library	118	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>3000</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field study, 2012

A follow up question was asked as to why students do not use the Library fully. The result is as presented in Table 7. The findings showed that 30.1% of the respondents stated that the library does not have adequate books and that if one does not visit the library early, one may not have access to any recommended books. When the responses were cross-checked with the Library, it came out that books are available but are not many to meet the needs of increasing number of students. Also, 57.1 % said that they do not use the Library, since they depend on lecturers' handouts or pamphlets. A further probe revealed that, some of the lecturers prepare notes and sell to students. Such students depend on these notes and pamphlets, instead of conducting research. Again 9.5% of the respondents said that they do not visit the Library because they are not encouraged by faculty staff. Furthermore, 3.3 % of the respondents said, the small size of the Library is a contributive factor for their inability to use the Library.

## 8. Conclusion

The study was undertaken at Koforidua Polytechnic with specific emphasis on only business students' use of the Library in the institution. The findings showed that 82.0% of the respondents were aware of the availability of

Library resources, 67.2% of respondents participated in Library orientation. However, 61.4% could not effectively make use of the resources because they have difficulty in retrieving materials from the shelves. The study also revealed that 63.3% of the respondents visit the Library to read lecture notes while 57.3% do not visit the Library because they depend on lecture notes. It was revealed from the study that 72.6% of the respondents could not give titles of journals available in the Library even though they claim knowing the journals in the Library.

## 9. Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study the following recommendations are worth noting. Information literacy course should be part of the curriculum as this could empower students to optimally access books, journals and other Library resources which will bring them into contact with cultural, scientific, technical and social ideas. When students are exposed to resources in the Library and are used appropriately by them it will produce great critical thinkers and well-taught graduates. A greater percentage of the respondents do not use the Library effectively since some depend on lecturers' pamphlets as already revealed by the study. To prevent this practice, lecturers should be made to just prepare lecture notes while students complement the notes by using the library to further conduct research to acquire more knowledge on what they have been taught. Again the holdings of the Libraries should be made available like producing and circulating accessions' lists periodically to the faculty staff that will in turn inform and recommend them to the students.

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