Availability, Accessibility and Utilization of Library Information Resources by Students of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO)

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Abstract
The study approached the availability, accessibility, and utilization of information resources by students of in the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. It was revealed that the university library was used by students to support classroom activities and therefore students relied on the information resources available mostly in print format for academic support. It was revealed that students utilized the information resources that were available and accessible in the library. However, the library had limited sources of information, and the available resources were not maximally positioned for access by students. Students' use of internet shows the need for the library to increase technology and digital information resources to improve the availability and accessibility of information resources for students to utilize other than the ones provided in print format. To achieve this study, a total of 681 users comprised the sample population and the questionnaire as the means of data collection.
Keywords: Academic and university library, availability, accessibility, utilization and information resources.

Introduction

The academic library is established to support academic activities and enhance teaching-learning undertakings consistent with university objectives. Frumkin and Reese (2011) summarized the role of the library in acquiring and disseminating information resources as a vital responsibility. This primary functions of university library include collection, organization, preservation, and delivery of information resources bring to the users (Ramaiah, 1998). The task requires the capacity to discern the diverse needs of library users to give both faculty (teaching and non-teaching) and students the information resources for learning, teaching, research, and career development purposes. Basically, utilization is dependent on available information resources accessible to students. This study approaches the availability, accessibility, and utilization of information resources by students of the Federal University of Technology Owerri.

Utilization of information depends on the information resources available in the library and also accessible to the student. The condition implies that availability and accessibility must be satisfied for utilization to be achieved. The mere acquisition of information resources by a library does not translate into accessibility. Granting access to library information resources requires a series of protocols (cataloging, indexing, etc.) to ensure that users can identify and locate the resources (Nwachukwu, Abdulsalami and Salami, 2014). It is also important for libraries to consider user-needs during the acquisition stage of information resources to maintain relevance (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002).

A library has been defined as a repository of knowledge. However, different definitions emerged from the biases people and institutions have on what makes up a library or what a library is. Presently, the emergence of information communication technology (ICT) is transforming the world of information, and adds a new perspective to how a library should be defined. While some agree on the definition of a library as an institution of books collected, processed, stored, retrieved, and used to disseminate knowledge, others prefer the definition that summarizes a library to represent a place (physical) where books and non-book materials are preserved for the purpose of spreading knowledge public (Nwachukwu, Abdulsalami and Salami, 2014).

Moreover, most of what constitute components of a library's definition depends on the type of library in question. We have different types of libraries with different operational definitions based on the categories of users served. Despite different services of public, academic, special or reference libraries, 'acquisition and dissemination of information' remains a definitional composition of library. The library is a major component of the university responsible for providing multiple services to support students for the duration of their course of study. Unlike the public library, which functions universally without restriction to any particular users, the academic library is positioned to provide academic support to students. Moreover, most academic libraries maintain public libraries in developed countries. Aina (2004) reports similar situations with National Libraries in Africa operating public libraries. Nonetheless, a library is defined as an institution responsible for the overall management and processing of the public knowledge (the intellectual products of society) for public access and use (Roberson, 2005).

Federal University of Technology, Owerri Library

The Federal University of Technology Owerri is one of the universities of technology established by the Nigerian government in 1980. As one of the nation's third generation universities, FUTO took off at a temporary site at the Lake Nwebere campus with the library starting from cradle acquitting the requisite resources and personnel services it needed to open its doors to users on the 9th of November, 1981 before moving to what is now the permanent university location at Ihiagwa, Owerri North local government (LGA) area of Imo State. The university library supports higher education objectives by providing information resources to teaching-learning, research training, and community service.

Problem Statement

In a typical Nigerian university library, availability and accessibility of information resources influence utilization by students. However, the first call of library functionality demands that the user has access to adequate information resources in order to meet their needs. Before users can utilize information in the library, the functions of making information readily available and accessible must first be activated. The university library serves the diverse academic community and in that respect must live up to the expectations of helping users achieve their respective information needs. As a school library, most of the services tend towards academic performance and success of students, as well as the goal of the university in fulfilling higher education objectives.

Unfortunately, libraries in Nigerian universities are poorly funded causing students to experience dearth information resources to supplement classroom instructions. Additionally, when information resources are available they are neither accessible nor utilized due to one problem or another associated with the technical processing of library resources. Moreover, the provision of information resources in sufficient balance and the proper organization encourages students to utilize library information resources. Therefore, the problem of this study investigates the availability, accessibility and utilization of information resources by students of the university studied. The study will reveal what information resources are available and accessible in the library, and the extent the students utilize the information resources.

Objective of the Study

Based on the problems identified in the study, the research provides the following objectives: To determine information resources available in the library, examine accessible information resources, establish the extent of information utilization by students, ascertain the frequency of use of information resources and to identify factors militating against students use of information resources in the library at the Federal University of Technology, Owerri.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Library Information Resources

The information resources in libraries serve different purposes that are in line with the objectives of establishing the university. Therefore, the school library helps the university to achieve the goals and objectives of higher education in making an information literate society. Because charity begins at home, the information literate society espoused here can be narrowed down to the student and university environment. Literarily, information resources include, but are not limited to, print and non-print materials resources. The print resources include journal publications, monographs, textbooks, articles, dissertations, and documents. While audio-visual tapes, projectors, cd's, and cassettes belong to non-print information resources of the library (Nnadozie & Nnadozie 2008; Hobohm, 1999; Olanlokun, 1995; Meho and Huas, 2001; Adekunle, 2004; Folster, 1989; Meho and Tibbo, 2003; Haart, 1997). Nazan and Kurbanoglu (1998) added encyclopedias, dictionaries, and periodicals to the list of library's print material resources. Also, it is the duty of the university library to support students, faculty, and user's innovative services by providing support for digital scholarship (Vinapoly and McCormick, 2013).

Presently, the wave of innovations ushered in by the emergence of information communication technology (ICT) in the scene of library services has added a new dimension to library information resources. The technology has added a digital touch to library services such as that reference services of the library can be executed digitally using electronic means (Watson, 2004; Agbata, et al., 2004). The establishment of the digital library oversees that digital resources and ensure information resources are available online to meet user aspiration for digital information (Wu, Thompson, Vacek, Watkins and Weidner, 2016). The result of such initiative has increased digital content adding thousands of information resources online contributing to the widening information resources at the disposal of the library. Libraries now provide statistical tools for data analysis along with training, and various online support systems for students to enjoy complete access to innovation that supports teaching-leaning and research. Information resources of university libraries are witnessing exponential growth and diversity, best described by Smith (2016) as retooling library information resources to support the innovation of reshaping library practices.

The objectives of the library may not be realizable unless its resources reach optimal capacity and use by faculty and students who depend on its information resources for different purposes. The value of library cannot be overemphasized, considering that any student no matter how brilliant cannot ignore the library. This

implies that students need library information resources to achieve adequate educational training and academic research. The information resources then become the beacon of school hope for students and faculty involved in teaching-learning and research. The value of both print and non-print resources become unquestionable in conjunction with the library's emerging electronic and digital information resources. Libraries information resources now include resources outside the traditional resources (prints and non-prints) such as computer hard and software, online database, internet facilities, e-books, and e-journals.

The university library has been regarded as the academic heart of the academic community with essential functions to provide students, students, and entire school community an enabling environment that supports higher education objectives. Without the information resources provided by the library, teaching-learning, research and other reasons for using library resources will lack requisite support. Rao (1993) referred to the library as the heart of the university. On the other hand, Sani (1976) described the library as a barometer for measuring university performance. Therefore, for the library to be relevant to higher education objectives, its functions of information delivery must be executed efficiently and timely (Nwachukwu, Abdulsalami and Salami, 2014). The library is significant to the academic performance from both student-learner and faculty-teacher perspectives (Popoola and Haliso, 2009).

Availability of Information Resources

The library invests in making information resources available and accessible to users which include students, faculty, and researchers. The library executes this fundamental responsibility for higher education as championed by universities. Availability of information resources includes all print and non-print material resources of the library. Nwosu (2000) mentioned textbooks, reference books, and serial publications as vital print information carrying resources for effective teaching-learning and research necessary to supplement classroom instructions. The addition of information technology (IT) that supports communication via the internet to what constitutes traditional resources of the library makes the information much more readily available. However, libraries must have in place the requisite capacity for the availability of digital and online information resources. That way, libraries must be able to demonstrate the presence of functional ICT as sources of information and different types of publications as information resources.

Buckland (1975) expects libraries to make available at all times information resources in both print and none-print as books and ICT respectively. By so doing, libraries may live up to its primary responsibility to users as well as fulfill higher education objectives. Rightfully put, "library is judged adequate by the quantity and quality of its physical stock" (Abdulsalami, 2013). Unavailability of library resources could take different interpretation from temporary to permanent. Lack of diversification could cause the inability of the library to meet the information demands of its users (Agolu and Agolu, 2002). Libraries must use multiple sources or platforms (books, non-books, print, non-print and ICT) to ensure information resources are available or risk losing its fundamental objectives. The advent of digital and online resources has put pressure on libraries to adopt innovative ways of making information available. Smith (2016) advised that libraries are changing and correct management formulates enduring policies capable of maintaining information resources available during periods of scarcity, loaned out resources, outdated, or even delayed acquisition to serve user needs. Librarians must maintain good money management qualities to overcome financial challenges resulting from inadequate funding and the high cost of information resources, primarily digital and online resources, and ensure that information resources are available.

Accessibility to Information Resources

In separate studies, availability of information resources does not automatically translate to resource accessibility and utilization (Lawal-Solarin, 2012; Nnadozie & Nnadozie, 2008). While availability is concerned with resources physically located in the library, accessibility deals with problems of storage, display, and transmission of information resources to users promptly. Accessibility to information resources is of paramount concern and relevant to library users (Ugah, 2008). Without access to resources, utilization is unrealizable, and the value of the resources meaningless to users. The issue of access poses numerous challenges to both library management and users because making resources accessible demands certain requisite skills, which when lacking, renders available resources available but not accessible. Weak and inadequate cataloging, shelving, and technical services contribute to the success or failure of accessibility of library information resources. In addition to the different types of barriers to accessibility of available information resources identified by (Ugah, 2008), Olowu (2004) categorized the obstacles as either natural or artificial.

Libraries must process information resources before users can make sense of the available resources. Because information resources available in most Nigerian university libraries are mostly print materials, problems of accessibility manifests from indexing, abstracting, cataloging, and bibliography. As a library standard procedure, information resources not processed cannot be utilized by users. Neelameghan (1981) confirms this by the assertion that accessibility is a prerequisite to information utilization. The integration of technology compounds the problem of accessibility as delivery of information resources. The inclusion of digital databases and online resources adds Internet access to the list of challenges. Libraries will now require services

of digital curation experts and data specialists to handle accessibility of digital resources. Failure to provide these services among others makes access to available information impossible and the inability of libraries to provide users the necessary information capable of restoring certainty level decreased by their initial lack of information (Kulthau, 2004).

Utilization of Information Resources

When it comes to the use of information resources of the library by users, availability and accessibility must be guaranteed before considering other variables. This is based on the premise that since library occupies space, its resources must exist within the said space it occupies. According to Ross and Sennyey (2008), an important attribute of the library as a place is self-evident. In fact, the possibilities of users locating a physical place called the library that provides information resources justify the library as a place. A library is a place where users visit with the primary intent to consume information. For students, the library is pivotal to academic performance and success through utilization of information resources relevant to teaching-learning-support. The library is there for every student to utilize information resources available and accessible to develop analytically in conjunction with classroom instructions in a self-passed capacity.

The library should be treated as a laboratory of information necessary and capable of taking classroom instruction to higher levels if adequately utilized by students, researchers, and faculty. Just as it's impossible for scientists to function without a laboratory, the academic library is indispensable to teaching-learning process and students, researchers, teachers, and the entire university community. Students need information resources in the library that can be applied practically to their needs and enrich their knowledge.

Methodology

The researcher chose the quantitative method as best suitable for the study based on the notion that it allows for a systemic, factual, and accurate description of a situation or area of interest investigated. Therefore, adopting a survey method enables the researcher to collect comprehensive and accurate data on the environment studied using a structured questionnaire designed for the library staff and registered students as the instrument of data collection. The population of the survey consisted of 42 library staff (professional and non-professional librarians) and 3,812 registered students with the university library for the 2010 academic session, bringing the total population to 3,854. However, the stratified random technique was applied to arrive at a sample size of 770 participants made-up of 8 librarians and 762 (20%) of the registered library users. Three experienced research assistants helped with administering and retrieving responses, and the exercise lasted a period of six weeks.

Data Analysis

A total of 770 questionnaires were administered to the participants, out of which 681 usable questionnaires returned from the library staff and students of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri library for data analysis. A chart illustration shows data analysis using frequency count and percentages.

Chart I: Types of Information Resources Available in the Library

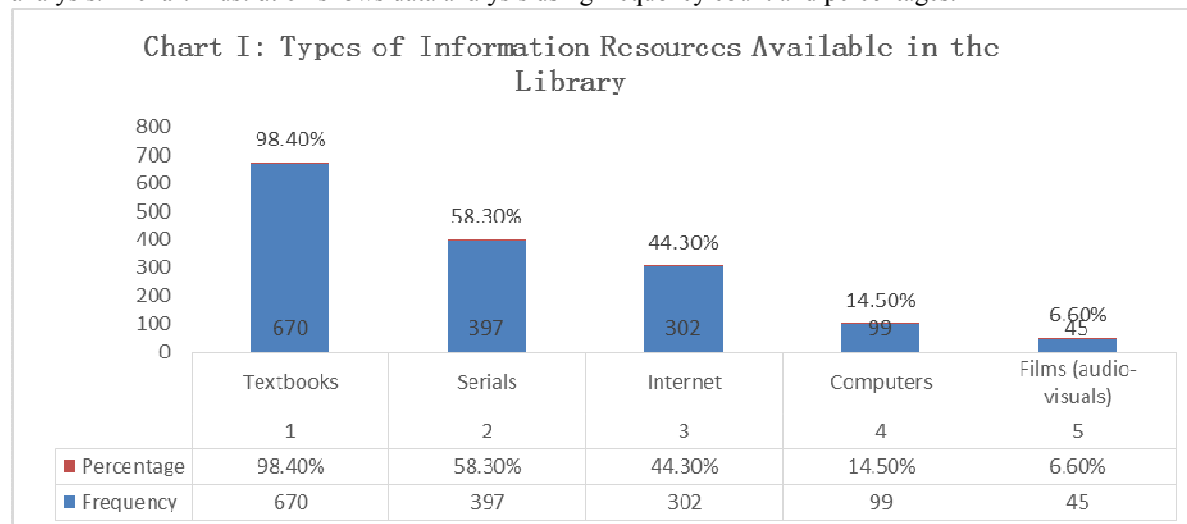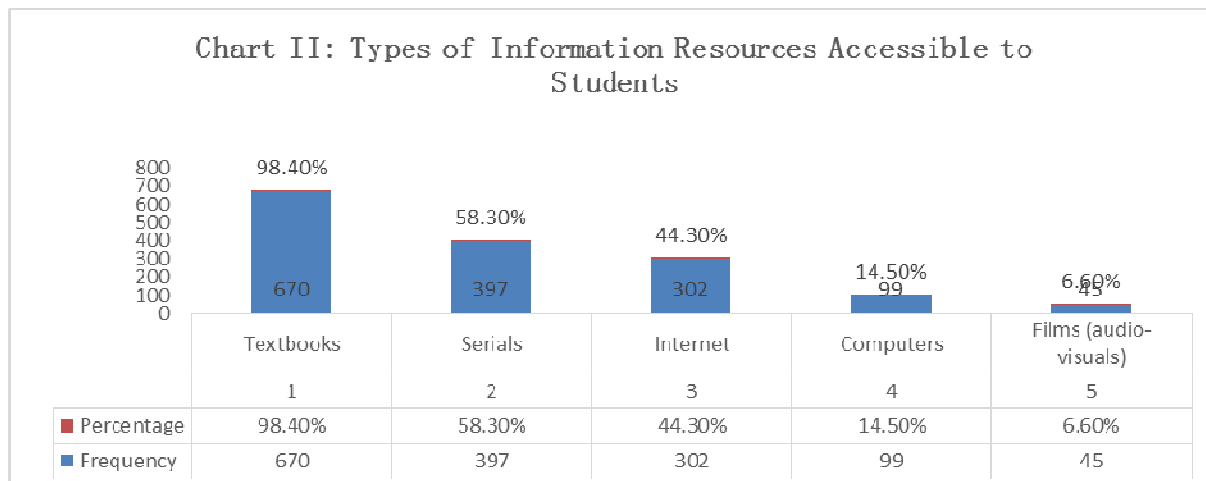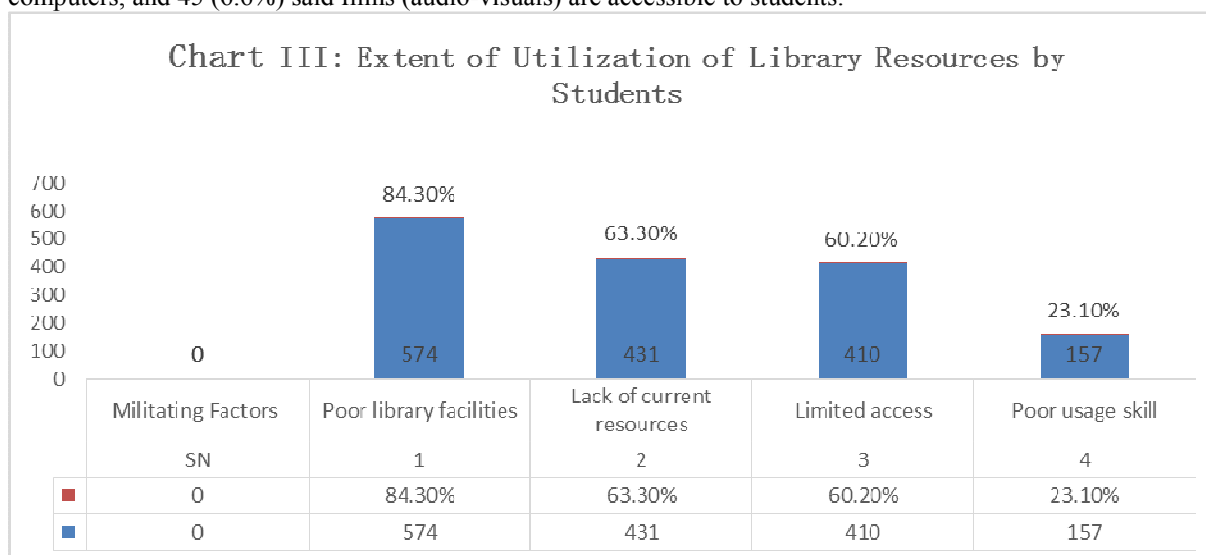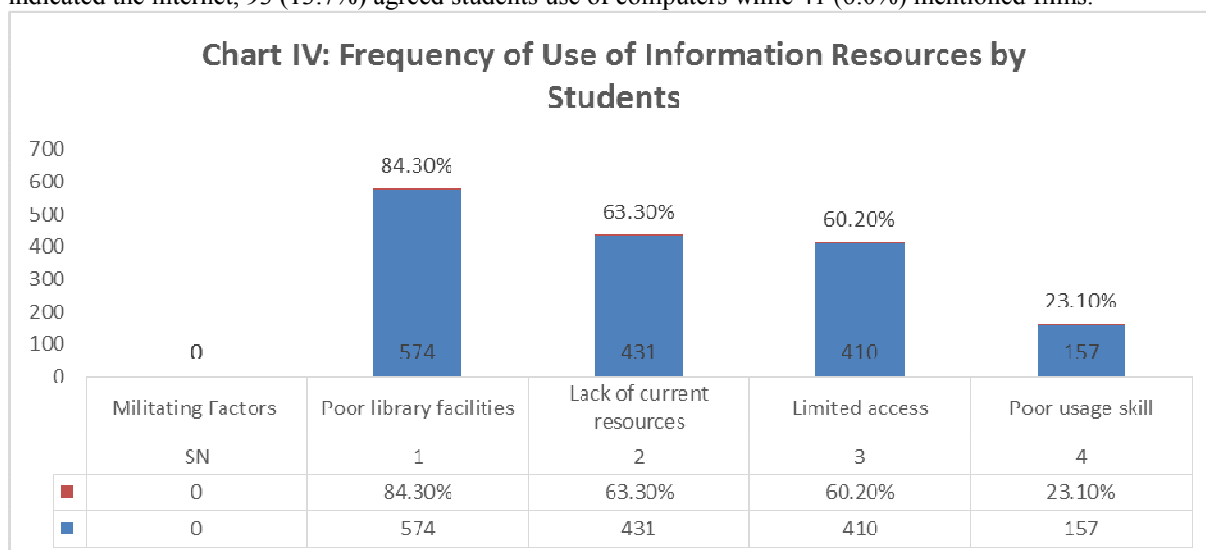|	Textbooks	Serials	Internet	Computers	Films (audio-visuals)
	1	2	3	4	5
Percentage	98.40%	58.30%	44.30%	14.50%	6.60%
Frequency	670	397	302	99	45

Chart 1, reports the types of information resources available at FUTO library. All the participants 681 (100%) indicated that textbooks are available in the library while 572 (84%) confirmed that the library has serials. 115 (16.9%) agreed the library has computers, 314 (46.1%) show the presence of internet and 90 (13.2%) indicated the library possessed films (audio-visuals).

Chart II: Types of Information Resources Accessible to Students

	Textbooks	Serials	Internet	Computers	Films (audio-visuals)
	1	2	3	4	5
Percentage	98.40%	58.30%	44.30%	14.50%	6.60%
Frequency	670	397	302	99	45

The above chart shows 670 (98.4%) respondents indicating textbooks as the highest information resources accessible to students. This is followed by 397 (58.3%) serials, 302 (44.3%) internet, 99 (14.5%) computers, and 45 (6.6%) said films (audio-visuals) are accessible to students.

Chart III: Extent of Utilization of Library Resources by Students

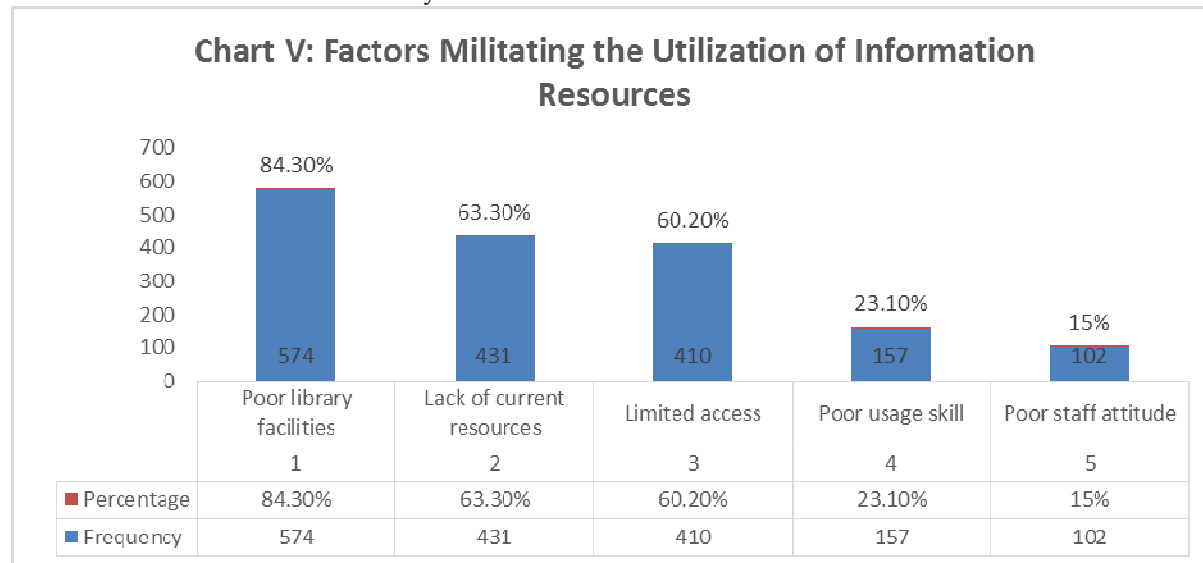|	Militating Factors	Poor library facilities	Lack of current resources	Limited access	Poor usage skill
SN		1	2	3	4
	0	84.30%	63.30%	60.20%	23.10%
	0	574	431	410	157

The chart above shows the extent of utilization of information resources by students in FUTO. The table reveals that 670 (98.4%) students mainly utilized textbooks, followed by 341 (50.1%) stating serials, 256 (37.6%) indicated the internet, 93 (13.7%) agreed students use of computers while 41 (6.0%) mentioned films.

Chart IV: Frequency of Use of Information Resources by Students

	Militating Factors	Poor library facilities	Lack of current resources	Limited access	Poor usage skill
SN		1	2	3	4
	0	84.30%	63.30%	60.20%	23.10%
	0	574	431	410	157

The above chart shows details of the use of information resources by the students in the institution

studied. Evidence show that 436 (64%) often used information resources, followed by 144 (21.2%) relative use of information resources, 90(13.2%) respondents indicates very often utilization, while 11 (1.6%) responded to the null use of information resources by students.

Chart V: Factors Militating the Utilization of Information Resources

	Poor library facilities	Lack of current resources	Limited access	Poor usage skill	Poor staff attitude
	1	2	3	4	5
Percentage	84.30%	63.30%	60.20%	23.10%	15%
Frequency	574	431	410	157	102

The above chart reveals that 574 (84.3%) of the participants indicated poor-facilities affected the use of information resources. Next is, lack of current information resources 431 (63.3%), followed by limited access to information resources 410 (60.2%), while 157 (23.1%) and 102 (15%) indicate poor-usage skills and poor staff attitude to negate information use in the library respectively.

Findings

I. Results from the study suggest that print materials, namely textbooks and serials, to be the primary information resources in addition to other resources available in the library considered. The evidence is 681 (100%) and 572 (84%) clear signs of information resources available. Both computers and films are rarely available with 115 (16.9%) and 90 (13.2%) respectively. However, the study agrees on internet availability by 314 (46.1%) which is an important outcome.

II. It has established that textbooks 670 (98.4%) and serials 397 (58%) are the most accessible information resource in the library. The internet is also present, having recorded 302 (44.3%). Computers and films are the least accessible, 99 (14.5%) and 45 (6.6%) respectively.

III. The study reveals that textbooks 670 (98.4%) and serials 341 (50.1%) are the primary sources of information resources utilized in the library by students. While internet usage recorded 256 (37%), students poorly used computers 93 (13.7%) and films 41 (6%).

IV. While accessing the frequency of use of library information resources found that 436 (64%) respondents indicate that information resources are often utilized.

V. The study established that poor library facilities is the major militating factor against the use of library information resources by students. Lack of current resources 431 (63.3%) and limited access 410 (60.2%) are the next militating factors to the use of information resources in the library by students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study was undertaken to investigate the availability, accessibility, and utilization of information resources by students in the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. The use of information resources by students would be enhanced if the resources adequately catered for the various needs of students. The findings reveal more information resources were available than can be accessed for efficient utilization by students. As a result, the library provided book resources that were not fully accessible to students for maximum utilization.

The study showed that the library has some collection of information resources mainly as print materials. It also reflects a dearth amount of resources to offer students, albeit, provided resources able to support students academically.

Students often utilize information resources such as textbooks, serials, and the internet as mainly available and accessible in near adequate amounts. In general, the findings reveal the information resources available, accessible and utilized by students in the federal university of technology was not sufficiently and adequately provided regarding what should comprise information resources in an academic school. It reminds academic libraries that if they must succeed, to be mindful of innovation and adopt new practices commensurate with the ever changing needs of the university environment.

Presently, the major information resources (print/books) shows the library is yet to integrate technology as a primary information provider. Students' use of internet proves the library needs to provide technology and digital information resources so as to improve the availability and accessibility of information resources for students to utilized other than the ones provided in current print format. There is a growing need to redirect focus towards expanding the library sources to take advantage of technology to enhance library stock and improve available, accessible, and utilizable information resources for students in this age of technological advancement and dependence is not out of place.

Finally, the following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

i. The library should improve its overall stock (information resources) to include multiple formats instead of limiting itself to prints and non-prints material.

ii. Most especially, the library should adopt technology as a major information resource, which will enable the library enjoy online information such as open access (OPAC) and online databases.

iii. Digital communication is paramount to successful hosting of information in multiple channels, therefore, the library should adopt strategic planning in its acquisition policy to cover the information needs of all library users

Finally, there should be a general improvement of the library with current and modern facilities of which digital technologies are paramount.

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