

Coming of Age: Information Seeking and Library use of Students before and after the introduction of digital information in Babcock University, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The crucial role of information technology (IT) in service provision in academic libraries is widely acknowledged and accepted the world over. But the extent to which this technology has been made a crucial part of library service provision may not be immediately ascertained; neither can the impact of its use by librarians on the services they provide to their clientele or the extent of the support given by university administrators. It is in the light of the above that this study investigated coming of age: Information seeking and library use of students in Babcock University, Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive research design. Data was collected using a questionnaire. Five hundred (500) students from third year and final year were randomly selected for the study. 426 copies of the questionnaire were returned with an 85 percent response rate. The findings showed a significant difference between students' library visit before and after the coming of information and communication technologies (ICTs). It further revealed that there was a positive relationship between frequency of ICT use and its usefulness to the respondents. Services provided by the librarians appeared to be helpful to the needs of students. In an ever changing environment, libraries are positioned to harness the ICTs in their services to meet student needs for information.

Keywords: Information and communication Technologies, Information seeking, information utilisation, academic libraries, Babcock university.

Background of the study

Babcock University started as Adventist College of West Africa (ACWA) in 1959, was renamed as Adventist Seminary of West Africa (ASWA) in 1976 and finally earned full university status by the Federal government of Nigeria in 1999. The mission of Babcock University is "Building people for leadership through quality Christian education, transforming lives, impacting society for positive change through the pervading influence of our graduates in service to Humanity. The library supports the university mission by providing timely and quality information sources and services. It (the library) aims at offering excellent and efficient services using the modern and unlimited capability of information and communication technology. The university library, named after the first indigenous vice-chancellor, Professor Adegunle A. Alalade, has a seating capacity of 250. Between 1999 and 2005, the library had over 36000 volumes of books and four computers used for word processing purposes and as at the time of this study, the library has over 50,000 volumes of books, over 150 current journal titles (both print and electronic) and collection of multimedia resources in almost all subject areas. The interaction with the university's librarian also reveals that there are 25 Internet-enabled computers stationed at strategic points in the main library while all other school libraries have more than three computers with full Internet access. The School of Law and Security Services library alone has over twenty computers, all connected to the Internet.

Problem Statement and Objective of the study

Academic libraries are established for the sole purposes of selecting, organizing, sorting, classifying vital Information to all people. Students as well as faculty members need to make effective use the materials for the purposes of research and advancement. This has been facilitated with the coming of ICTs that made browsing and vital information possible. However, it is not yet clear to what extent the coming of the ICTs has enhanced the information seeking behavior of Babcock university students. It is in the light of this that the present study investigated information seeking behavior of students before and after the coming of the ICTs. The specific objectives of this study were to:

1. determine the frequency of information seeking behavior Babcock University students before the coming of digital revolution
2. determine to what extent Babcock university library staff offer help to BU students.
3. analyse the frequency of information seeking behavior o students after the coming of the ICTs.

Literature Review

The age long role of the library has been to develop and maintain collections of materials in all formats and to make these materials available to all users (Olayinka 2007). Academic libraries are established for the sole purposes of providing quality, timely and relevant information services to the community of scholars (Odiase, Unegbu & Haliso 2001). According to Olayinka (2007) and Wolpart (1999) digitization is a step towards developing digital libraries and it involves taking traditional library materials like books and papers and converting them to electronic form, where they can be stored and manipulated through the use of computers, cooperation, automation and the building of the digital library, for the enhancement of service delivery in support of teaching and research are the principal drivers that will shape the collective future of libraries as suppliers of information to the scholarly world. Librarians make every possible effort to train them on how to use the materials.

Librarians play a major role in transforming data into information and packaging the information into knowledge. They accomplish this through acquiring, organizing and indexing information. They make every possible effort to ensure that users know how and where to get these materials for their research purposes. In order to ensure that students use library resources to their full potential, librarians make every possible effort to train them on how to use the materials. They use orientation, onsite visitation as well as teach user education courses. Through the use of the online Public Access catalogue (OPAC), appropriate education is given to both staff and students on how products such as X-Lib is used, as well as electronic journals and databases like JSTOR, AGORA, or EBSCOHOST.

Information at all levels remains the life-blood of any organisation, and the 21st century has witnessed a remarkable evolution in library resources as evidenced by the considerable increase of technology ranging from bibliographic to full databases. Lecturers, practitioners, researchers, students and others in all fields are patrons of the library and need up-to-date information. Gbaje (2007) opines that technology has brought about a completely different way of providing information to the users where as Williams and Sawy (2003) in the era of technology every thing is connected to every thing. However, without adequate information seeking behaviors, these resources go to waste. Information seeking and knowledge is a conscious effort an individual or group of people make towards acquiring new knowledge in response to a need or gap in their knowledge (Odiase, Unegbu and Haliso 2001). Scholars believe that information seeking is related to learning and problem solving (Ase 2003, Marchionini 1995), and that it is an interactive process. It depends on initiatives on the part of the information seeker, feedback from the information environment, and decisions for subsequent initiatives based on the feedback (Marchionini 1995). Information seeking can also be seen from a librarian's point of view. It is an aspect of the scholarly work librarians who strive to develop collections, and provide services and organizational structure that facilitate information seeking. In this sense, information seeking can be seen as a mental framework (Wiberley 1989). In spite of all the efforts made to ensure that students get the best services, most of them still lack the necessary skills to use the library. A study by Zondyⁱⁱ indicates that first year undergraduate students at the university of Zululand, South Africa been examined and the finding reveals a low level of competence in the use of library as well as poor information seeking patterns.

Methodology

Descriptive research design was used for the study. The study population consisted of Babcock University students in Nigeria. 500 students from third year and final year were randomly selected. A validated questionnaire was used for data collection. Four hundred and twenty six copies of the questionnaire was administered with 85 percent response rate. Data collected were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression analysis.

Findings

Demographic information of the respondents

Out of the 426 respondents, 236(55 percent) were female students while 188(45 percent) were male students. 325 (76 percent) of the respondents fell within the ages of 18-25; 59 (14 percent) between 25-30; 28 (7 percent) were under 18 years of age and 10 (2 percent) were between the ages of 30 and 40. The implication of this is that majority of the students who use the library are between the ages of 18 and 25.

H01: There is no significant relationship between information need of students and their library visit.

Table 1: Test of significant relationship between students information need and their library visit.

Variable	Mean	Std.Dev	N	R	P	Remark
Information need	9.051	1.766	426	-.107*	.027	Sig
Frequency of library visit to meet the need	29.150	9.011				

Table 1 presents a summary of data analysis on the test of significant relationship between student's information need and their library visit pattern to meet the information need. The mean score of information need is ($X=9.051$; $SD=1.766$) while that of their library visit to meet the information need is ($X=29.150$; $SD=9.011$). The test of hypothesis reveals that there is a significant relationship between the information need of students and their library visit ($r=-.107^*$, $N=426$, $p<.05$), therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This is in agreement with the findings of Haliso and Okwilagweⁱⁱⁱ where students indicated their information needs and knew where to get answers to their needs.

H02: There is no significant difference in the visit to the library and use of Information by the students before and after the coming of the ICTs.

Table 2: test of significant difference between in the visit of library before and after the coming of ICTs

Use of information	N	Mean	Std.Dev	Crit-t	Cal-t	DF	P
Has ICT affected your library visit? Yes (after ICT)	275	26.985	5.995	1.96	2.437	424	.015
No (before ICT)	151	25.410	7.031				

Table 2 revealed a summary of data analysis on the test of significant differences between library visits of students before, during and after the coming of the ICTs. The mean score of library visit by students before the coming of the ICTs is ($X=25.410$; $SD=7.031$) and that of library visit after the coming of the ICTs is ($X=26.985$; $SD=5.995$). The test of hypothesis reveals that there is a significant difference between students library visit before and after the coming of ICTs is ($Crit-t=1.96$, $Cal-t=2.437$, $df=424$, $p<.05$ level of significance). The null hypothesis is rejected. This is supported by Osaniyi (2010) who advocated for the advancement of the ICTs so that the need of most promising future leaders be met.

H03: There will be no significant relationship between frequency of ICT use and its usefulness to the respondents

Table 3: test of significant relationship between frequency of ICT use and its usefulness to the respondents.

Variable	Mean	Std.Dev	N	R	P	Remark
Frequency of ICT use	26.427	6.418	426	.520**	.000	Sig
Its usefulness	28.232	6.626				

Table 3 presents a summary of data analysis to test the significant relationship between the frequency of ICT use and its usefulness to the respondents in Babcock University. The mean score of frequency of ICT use by the respondents is ($X=26.427$; $SD=6.418$) while that of its usefulness to the respondents is ($X=28.232$; $SD=6.626$). The test of hypothesis reveals that there is a significant relationship between frequency of ICT use and its usefulness is ($r=.520^{**}$, $N=426$, $p<.01$). From the table, it could be deduced that frequency of ICT use had positively influenced its usefulness in the study. The null hypothesis is rejected. This is in agreement with the findings of Ndinoshiho (2010) who found out that undergraduate students in Namibia use the electronic information sources for the purposes of their academic work. The use of Internet, e-mail facility and OPAC are among the facilities used by the students.

Purpose of Information seeking/library visit

An overwhelming majority of the respondents (90.1 percent) stated the purpose of their information seeking is for research; 83 percent of them for doing assignment ;77 percent for general awareness, while over 65 percent of them stated that they visit the library for socializing purposes among other things. This support the earlier

findings of Haliso and Okwilagwe (2003) where students stated that they knew where to locate the materials in the library.

What is the average time spent on Information gathering activity?

Table 4: Average time spent by respondents on information gathering activity?

S/N	Activity/Time spent	X	SD
1	Doing projects	1.99	1.01
2	Discussing with fellow students	1.83	.95
3	Doing Assignments	1.81	.86
4	Scanning textbooks	1.65	.82
5	Photocopying	1.41	.82
6	Reading e-mail alerts	1.40	.80
7	Scanning journal articles	1.39	.76
8	Discussing with the librarian	1.29	.73

Table 4 indicated the average time spent in the library by the respondents for the purposes of information gathering. The average time spent on information gathering activity as responded by the students are; doing projects (X=1.99;SD=1.01);discussing with fellow students (X=1.83;SD=.95);doing assignment(X=1.81;SD=.86);scanning textbooks (X=1.65;SD=.82);photocopying(X=1.41;SD=.82);reading e-mail alerts(X=1.40;SD=.80);scanning journal articles(X=1.39;SD=.76)and finally discussing with the librarian(X=1.29;SD=.73).

What type of help do students get from the library staff?

Table 5: Type of help respondents receive from the library staff

S/N	Type of help rendered by library staff	X	SD
1	Computerized (OPAC)	1.57	.50
2	Bibliographical information	1.51	.50
3	To locate current periodicals	1.44	.50
4	In the use of reference books	1.39	.49
5	Manual	1.38	.49
6	To locate books/documents	1.33	.47
7	To seek any information	1.31	.46

Table 5 indicated the type of help respondents received from the library staff. The type of help given to students is indicated in the table above. Those who said they got help from the library staff on how to use the OPAC ranked (X=1.57; SD=.50); this is followed by those who said they got help locate bibliographic information with (X=1.51; SD=.50); in locating current periodicals with (X=1.44; SD=.50); use of reference books (X=1.39; SD=.49) etc. This is in agreement with Haliso and Madukoma (2010) finding where students indicated that since the adoption of the ICTs especially the functioning of the OPAC getting materials has been so easy and rewarding.

Summary and conclusion

The study has been able to establish the fact that the number of students preferring to visit the library after the coming of the ICTs outnumbered those who visited before the coming of ICTs. Furthermore, the study revealed a significant relationship between frequency of ICT use and its usefulness to the respondents. The implication of this is that as BU library acquires modern ICTs and creates awareness by training users on how best to use them, it's expected that the degree of its actual usefulness also will increase. On the other hand, average time spent in the library with the librarians is insignificant and least of all the 7 points. There could be several reasons why this is the case. Perhaps the hours that librarians are available do not coincide with when students need help. Perhaps students are unaware that they can get help from a librarian. Perhaps students perceive that librarians are not user friendly. More study would need to be done to determine what might be causing these lower results.

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