Information Impact

Challenges of Rendering Effective Library Services to Users in Select University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the challenges of rendering effective library services to users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. A descriptive survey method was adopted for the study in line with the objectives of the study as the instrument used in collecting data. Three research questions were formulated to guide the study. The population of the study consists of 116 librarians in all the federal universities libraries in South- South Nigeria. A total of 116 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 94 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved using descriptive statistics mean and percentage mean score of 2.5 and above and percentage score of 50% were considered as acceptable. The study revealed that the benefits of rendering effective library services to library users are academic advancement, research, reading and promotion. The study also shows challenges for rendering of library services to library users to be obsolete materials, poor budgetary allocation, lack of infrastructural facilities and poor recruitment process. Strategies to render effective library services to library users are acquisition of current materials, adequate budget to the library, provision of infrastructures and sound recruitment of staff. The study recommends that acquisition of current materials is critical to good library service delivery, robust budget to the library, provision of state of the art infrastructure facilities and recruitment of competent personnel. The findings of this study will help library management whose libraries are lagging behind to provide all the basic materials/infrastructures needed for effective library services. Also, transforming academic libraries will enhance the capability of libraries to contribute positively to the reality of knowledge in the society in contemporary Nigerian society.

Keywords

Library Services, Tools, University Libraries, South-South, Challenges

Introduction

The university library has a prominent role to play in supporting higher education to fulfill the objectives of its parent institution by rendering effective services to library users. Library services are services outlined in the library in order to solve the information needs of the library users at a particular given time. Also, library services entail the entirety of support provided by the library for its users. It can also be seen as the effort made by the library personnel to endeavor with the availability and accessible resources to provide answers to user's request. According to Chukwueke et al. (2018), these services, to a large extent, define the well-being of the library clientele, educationally and otherwise. Aina (2004) asserts that the quality of a university is measured by the services provided by the library because of its unique position in the over-all university system. According to the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) (2014),the university library shall carry out the following services: Circulation services; inter-library loan services; reference and information services; current awareness services; selective dissemination of information (SDI); user-education; literature searching; compilation of bibliographies; indexing and abstracting services; knowledge management services; preservation and conservation services; bindery services; information literacy services; information media literacy; internet services; archiving services; knowledge management services; preservation services; bibliographic services; consultancy services; photocopying/reprographic services; publication of guides to the library; compilation and maintenance of statistics; e-library services; translation services; statistical data analysis services; internet services; and book editing services.

For a library to render its services effectively, infrastructural facilities, current library materials, competent personnel and sound budgetary allocation among others is critical. In recent times, it has been observed that library services have been declining with a lot of challenges which the library management has failed to address. The use of infrastructures facilities such as internet and telecommunication by library staff to render library services comes with couple of challenges. According to Adomi (2005), the nation's poor telecommunication infrastructure has been a subject of debate to researchers and higher institutions. Prangya and Rabindra (2013) found that lack of infrastructure is seen as one of the obstacles of rendering effective library services. Also, the recruitment of incompetent personnel to man sensitive units of the library also

poses as threat to effective service in the library. This was supported by Peretomode (2010) when he opined that the availability of a competent work force will enhanced library services in the university. Furthermore, obsolete library materials in the library are another major challenge. Libraries are expected to acquire current materials which should cut across all field of knowledge in the university. Nwokike (2019) asserted that obsolete materials in the library hindered library services because most users would like to seek somewhere else for current once. In addition, the budgetary allocations to libraries keep on dwindling every year as the price of library materials has skyrocket. The federal government and state government should as a matter of urgency increased library allocation for effective services. It is in light of this that this topic- challenges of rendering effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria become imperative.

Statement of the problem

The university library is the hub of learning, reading, and research. The users of the libraries are students, lecturers, and staff among others. The librarians ensure that they render effective services in the library in order to satisfy their needs. Observation has shown that most libraries in Nigeria lack the required library services, facilities and resources to satisfy users' needs; hence, they cannot effectively promote successful education. It has been observed that literature exist on challenges of rendering effective library services to library users, but no work has been carried out on the challenges of rendering effective library services to library users in selected university libraries with particular reference to South-South, Nigeria. It is as a result of this situation that prompted the researchers to embark on this study, in order to find a lasting solution to the problem stated.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is to find out the challenges of rendering of effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

1. To find out the benefits of rendering effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.
2. To find out the challenges of rendering effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

3. To find out strategies of rendering effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

Research questions

The following research questions were in line with the objectives:

1. What are the benefits of rendering effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges of rendering effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria?
3. What are the strategies of rendering effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria?

Literature review

Observation has shown that most university libraries in Nigeria lack the required library services, facilities and resources to satisfy users' needs; hence, they cannot effectively promote successful education. Dike (2004) in Chukwueke et al. (2018) suggested that effective library services play a significant and indispensable role in developing good reading culture in students at all levels of education, which consistently enhance their academic performance. Interestingly, some of the major problems of educational development such as mass failure of students in public examinations and poor reading culture could greatly be attributed to inadequate library services. One of such challenges is epileptic power supply. This was supported by Adomi (2007) who state that power outages are a problem militating against information/internet provision and use in African countries. Similarly Ossai-Ugbah (2012) claims that this power outages increases the general overhead and running cost thus having a negative impact on the use of social media for marketing library and information services in Nigerian university libraries, how then can university libraries be able to effectively use social media for promotion in a cost-effective manner. In yet another line of thought, even when the electricity is available, the current is either too high or too low. It was in this light that Akonu (2005) asserts that erratic power supply in Nigeria has resulted in the burning of some components which could not easily be replaced.

Furthermore, power supply in the country is still a mirage till date. The scenario is very sad, virtually all social media applications are powered by electricity but the supply of electricity in Nigeria is nothing to write home about. Supporting this Information is power and its

significance to development and education cannot be overemphasized. It is an indispensable tool, a key that supports research and education. Interestingly, the library is seen as the store house of various kinds of information; it houses necessary items and resources that could be consulted for the extraction of unique and authentic information. The elementary purpose of the library is to provide adequate resources capable of satisfying the information needs of the clientele. In satisfying the needs of the user, the library must ensure adequate services, quality and useful resources. According to Ellis, Rosenblum, Stratton, Armes-Stratton (2014), in recognition of the trends and challenges occurring within higher education and academic libraries, libraries Organizational Review Team (ORT) sought to redefine professional roles and functions to strategically position the libraries for the future. Emezie and Nwaohiri (2013) in their paper highlight the challenges to effective information services delivery in the 21st century and these to them include: lack of competency, lack of technology literacy, poor internet connectivity, inadequate power supply and poor funding.

In another development, inadequate funding is a serious challenge affecting the activities of academic libraries in Nigeria. The government does not fund the library adequately and this has caused a lot of problems. It hinders effective and efficient service delivery. This problem, according to Ebiwolate (2010) can be likened to lack of political will. He observed that lack of political leads to negligence on the part of government to fund university library properly; non-approval of budget; and non- release or non-implementation of budget (where approved). Inadequate funding has led to poor condition of services, shortage of professional staff; poor human resource management; extreme dilapidated structures and facilities; obsolete resources; difficulty in extending services to the rural areas, inadequate ICT facilities and others. Similarly, Eze and Uzoigwe, (2013) findings revealed that certain factors pose problems to academic libraries, such factor as poor funding of the libraries and others which have a bearing on it – poor infrastructure (especially electronic facilities) and high cost of maintaining the facilities.

Aina (2004) posits that the services of academic libraries in Nigeria are grossly inadequate with outdated collections coupled with lack of sufficient professional librarians. The level of patronage of the libraries is low, less relevant materials are acquired; awareness and understanding of the library concept by the community is poor, bureaucratic in-orderliness, poor

funding, and lack of zeal to introduce new services. Unfortunately, Internet facilities installed in some public libraries cannot be maintained. Also, Okoro (2006), as cited in Akanwa and Udo-Anyanwu (2017), expresses in rational terms that there is a direct bearing between the level of funding and the growth of library collection or resources. Fund is needed for the acquisition of both print and non-print resources, technological infrastructure, staff development and maintenance of other facilities. Libraries are often starved of vital funds that should be used in developing their collection.

Ebiwolate, (2010), also so sees recruiting of none qualified librarians and support staff as a major problem affecting the rendering of effective library services in university libraries today. The researcher argues that people are not employed based on confidence and merit but on "connections". This causes drawback in action and inefficiency in any organization bearing in mind that one cannot give what he does not have. Eruvwe and Omekwu (2021) opined that sociological factors such as "Man-know man, connectivity, ethnic consideration, political leanings, federal character principles, nepotism" have been given significant consideration in the value scale of recruitment in the Nigerian public sector establishment, including higher institutions of learning. It is no longer news that before an applicant gets a job in any of our public organizations in Nigeria he/she needs to know somebody to influence it, without taking into consideration what this people could offer if recruited. This has drastically affected services delivery in various university libraries in Africa and the world at large.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design using questionnaire as instrument of data collection. The choice of the methodology used in this study is appropriate because its facts finding in nature. The total population of the study was made up of 116 librarians from the six federal universities in South –South Nigeria as shown in the table below. A total of 116 copies of the questionnaire were distributed and 94 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics precisely mean scores and percentages. The mean score of 2.5,above and percentage score of 50% were considered as acceptable by the respondents, while below 2.5 mean score below 50% score is considered as not acceptable by the respondents.

Table: 1: The Distribution of the Population of the Study

S/N	Name of the Library	Librarians
1	University of Benin Library(UNIBEN)	20
2	University of Calabar Library(UNICAL)	18
3	Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun Library (FUPRE)	12
4	University of Port-Harcout Library (UNIPORT)	25
5	University of Uyo Library (UNI-UYO)	28
6	Federal University of Otuoke Library	13
	Total	**116**

Source: This information was gotten from the establishment units of the university under study through personal contact in 2021/2022 academic session.

As shown in the table 1 above, the populations of this study consist of 116 recruited librarians in the federal university libraries under study. The breakdown of the number of librarian's in the federal university libraries in South South Nigeria is as follows: University of Benin library (20); University of Calabar library (18); Federal University of Petroleum Resources Effurun Library (16), University of Port Harcout Library (25); University of Uyo (28); and Federal University Otuoke Library (13) respectively.

Table 2

Research Question 1

Benefits of rendering effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Academic advancement	43	34	15	2	3.2	Accepted
2	Research	34	24	22	14	2.8	Accepted
3	Reading	33	37	15	9	3.0	Accepted
4	Promotion	34	41	12	7	3.0	Accepted

The data presented in table 2 revealed that four (4) identified items on the benefits of rendering effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South are:

academic advancement (3.2), research (2.8), reading (3.0) and promotion (3.0) respectively. One can infer from the study that there are lots of benefits in rendering effective library service to users. The library management should try as much as possible to provide adequate library materials/infrastructures that would enhance academic advancement, research, reading and promotion respectively.

Table 3:

Research Question 2

Challenges facing the effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Obsolete materials	43	32	11	8	3.1	Accepted
2	Poor budgetary allocation	37	42	15	0	3.2	Accepted
3	Poor Infrastructures	32	36	19	7	2.9	Accepted
4	Poor recruitment process	23	34	20	17	2.6	Accepted

The data presented in table 3 shows that four (4) identified items on the challenges facing the rendering of library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria toinclude:obsolete materials (3.1), poor budgetary allocation (3.2), poor infrastructures (2.9) and poor recruitment process (2.6). The finding is supported by Aina (2004) when he posits that the services of academic libraries in Nigeria are grossly inadequate with outdated collections coupled with lack of sufficient professional librarians. Also, Ebiwolate (2010) added that poor budgetary allocation to libraries would hinder their services and development.

Table 4

Research Question 3

Strategies to render effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	-X	Decision
1	Acquisition of current materials	37	43	12	2	3.2	Accepted
2	Adequate	34	36	15	9	3.0	Accepted

	budget to the library					
3	State of the art infrastructure facilities	38	32	13	11	3.0	Accepted
4	Sound recruitment process	39	39	13	3	3.2	Accepted

The data presented in table 4 shows that four (4) identified items on the strategies to render effective library services to library users in selected university libraries in South-South, Nigeria are: Acquisition of current materials (3.2), adequate budget to the library (3.0), state of the art infrastructure facilities (3.0) and sound recruitment process (3.2) respectively. The findings is in line with Akanwa and Udo-Anyanwu (2017), who suggested funding of libraries will enhanced the growth and development of its library resources. In addition, Peretomode (2010) opined that the availability of a competent work force will enhance library services.

Conclusion

Effective library services play a significant and indispensable role in developing good reading culture in students at all levels of education, which consistently enhance their academic performance. It also aid in the achievement of the objectives of education at all levels. Libraries are therefore established to help render effectively service delivery to enable users as well as the university community delight in reading, learning and using library resources as a lifetime culture which gives them the opportunity to evaluate and use information properly. The federal government and state government should try as much as possible to fund libraries by allocating good and robust budget in order to enhance effective services delivery. Also, a good power supplies that will power the library during their service period is critical. The librarians should also ensure that acquisition of current materials is paramount. The library collections should cut across all subject areas been thought in the university. Lastly, the recruitment of competent hands is also critical. A sound recruitment without the interference of nepotism and god fatherism will definitely increase improved service delivery. The findings of this study will help library management whose libraries are lagging behind to provide all the basic materials/infrastructures needed for effective library services. Transforming academic libraries enhances the capability of

libraries to contribute positively to the reality of knowledge in the society in contemporary Nigerian society.

Recommendations

The study recommends thus:

1. Acquisition of current materials is critical to good library service delivery;
2. A robust budget to the library will definitely enhanced library service;
3. A state of the art facilities will increase the job performance of staff and also enhanced good library services; and
4. Recruitment of librarians and support staff should be done on merit.

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