THE ASSESSMENT OF PATRONAGE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARY AMONG FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC ILARO STUDENTS

[1]Odeyemi Bolaji Victoria & [2]Odeyemi Olusegun Osoba
[1]The Library
[2]Works and Services Department
Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, Ogun State
E-MAIL:*odeyemibolajivictoria@gmail.com & odeyemiolusegunosoba@gmail.com*
TEL: +2348138348170; +2348137841171

Abstract

The academic library serves as the hub for serious and rigorous intellectual inquiry and scholarly creation. The academic library existed because students existed. But since the emergence of ICT, which led to the dependence on Google and other search engines to seek solutions to class problems, the fear of academic libraries being pushed aside has been rumoured. To this effect, it is necessary to dive into the scope of weighing the relevance and success rate of the academic library in this ICT age.Across-sectional survey design was adopted, the population of study are Federal Polytechnic Ilaro students, with a population of over 6,449 students for the academic year 2021–2022. Students' data (their library attendance) was collected over the course of twelve months (July 2021 to June 2022). To collect information from randomly selected Federal Polytechnic Ilaro students, 150 well-structured questionnaires titled "The Assessment of Patronage of Academic Libraries among Federal Polytechnic Ilaro Students" were used. A total of 120 (80%) respondents responded to the questionnaire items. It was discovered from the study's findings that the students' school population against the library usage was not very encouraging as the students tended to make use of the library more during the examination period. Based on the findings, it is necessary for academic libraries to make their materials electronic (digitalised) so that students and other users can have easy and quick access to them. This will give a lasting facelift to the academic library.

Keywords: *Academic library, patronage, students, federal polytechnic Ilaro, academic community, information communication technology*

Introduction

The academic library is the focal point around which serious and intense intellectual development and scholarship are birthed. It is a critical component, as well as an indispensable instrument, of the intellectual, cultural, and socio-economic symbolic and mutually beneficial relationship that exists between the academic library and the academic community. The academic library is indispensable, as it will best serve when it is well stocked to serve as a storehouse of information which users can resort to for data or information. It is also in this critical role that Ramatu (2016), argued that for centuries, academic libraries have been playing critical and important roles in supporting research in all subjects and disciplines within their host universities and colleges. Aina (2016), in his views on the importance of the academic library, opined that the main purpose of the academic library is to support the objectives of an academic environment in the areas of learning, teaching, research, and services.

Taking a conceptual approach to the critical role of the academic library, Ramatu (2016) opined thatacademic libraries are established, owned, and funded by universities and colleges for the purpose of providing support services in the areas of research, learning, and teaching. Therefore, it could be inferred from the views expressed thus far that the primary aim or objective of an academic library is to offer those who may be said to constitute its primary clientele (the faculty students and academic staff of the university or college) the academic and research services in support of the programmes of the university of which it is part. The major functions of academic libraries are derived from Obunadike's (2018) definition of the function of a library as "to enable inquirers to identify library materials relevant to their inquiries and to supply them with copies of the materials for their use". It is in line with these views that Ramatu (2016) viewed the materials library as the heart of the university or college. Thus, the functions of academic libraries can be summarized as:

- ✓ To fulfill both the needs of the instructional programme of the parent institution and the research needs of the students, faculty staff members, and people outside the academic community through the collection and acquisition of knowledge in all formats;

- ✓ To organize knowledge for easy storage and retrieval, the technical processes, which include ordering, receiving, accessioning, cataloguing, classification, and preparing materials for their students and faculty, help the academic libraries provide maximum access to collections;
- ✓ Making resources accessible to users and preserving knowledge for posterity. In supporting the instructional research needs of their students and faculty, academic libraries provide maximum access to collections

From these are derived the services of the academic libraries which include:

- ✓ User education (orientation/instruction services)
- ✓ Inter-library loan/connection services
- ✓ Abstracting and indexing services
- ✓ Bibliographical services
- ✓ Cataloguing and classification services
- ✓ Reference services
- ✓ Information services
- ✓ Circulation services

However, these traditional functions and services provided by the academic library are being threatened and challenged by newer innovations and inventions in the areas of information dissemination, storage, and retrieval. The emergence of newer mobile devices and their influence and impact on the behaviours of information seekers is too conspicuous. In recent years, studies have revealed that students' information-seeking behaviours and habits have changed remarkably. Utilizing the increasingly ubiquitous internet and powered by ever-improving search engines, the World Wide Web (www) has become the largest and easiest-to-use storehouse of information in the world. Ramatu (2016).

As students and scholars turned in large numbers to the Web, few, if any, argued that it was a trustworthy source of authoritative information. Being suspicious of the quality of information found on the web did not discourage its attraction. However, statistics indicated that the use of the web and other ICT facilities continued to increase. The implications are enormous, and unless academic libraries are willing to adjust and adopt innovations in the way they operate, they may end up being edged into insignificance even in areas of their core competence.

Statement of the Problem

A library is the heart and soul of education and knowledge-seeking society. But the emergence of information communication technology and thus digital libraries makes it a necessity for an academic library to keep up with their innovations. An academic library is a library situated within an academic environment. This makes it necessary for an academic library to yield its fruit by propagating and promoting a healthy educational system. To this effect, it is imperative to investigate the status quo, success likelihood, students' response to library usage, and academic library position in the 21st century, among others. This study will explore the aforementioned points and bring to light the facts about them.

Objectives of the Study

1. To determine the relevance and likelihood of success for academic libraries
2. To determine the status quo of academic libraries
3. To compare students' usage of the library from July 2021 to June 2022

Significance of the Study

This study will bring to light the future hope, current position, and level of usage of academic libraries among students. The output of this study will serve as a blueprint for academic libraries, information managers, information scientists, researchers, lecturers, students, and teachers to chart the right course of action for the use of academic libraries.

2.0 Review of Related Literatures

An academic library is a library that is attached to academic institutions above the secondary level, serving the teaching and research needs of students and staff. These libraries serve two complementary purposes: to support the school's curriculum and to support the research of the university faculty and students. Academic libraries are information centres established in support of the mission of their parent institutions to generate knowledge and equip

people with knowledge in order to serve society and advance the well being of mankind. Khanna defines academic libraries as those special libraries found in educational institutions and whose main purpose is to serve the special needs of a specialized or homogenous clientele. Oyegunle (2017).

The academic library in an educational institution also plays a part in supporting the research efforts and this role is stronger in academic libraries than in public libraries, The library helps to conserve the research potential of the university or college. Aguolu (2021), noted that the university library is the heart of the university. This is because, the academic health, intellectual vitality and effectiveness of any university depends largely upon the state of health and excellence of its library which is its lifeblood.

According to Momodu (2015), academic libraries all over the World are established tosupport their parent institutions in actualizing their objectivesof teaching, learning and research. However, study hasshown that there is a decline in the use of library physicalcollections and services which may jeopardize the reason forthe establishment of the library in the first place andnegatively affect the quality of teaching, learning andresearch in institutions. In support of this fact, Grimes andBoening (2021) posited that many library users by passlibrary resources and to the Web for information. Similarly,Connell (2018) posited that majority of library users visit alibrary's virtual website more often than its physical location.Based on these facts from Grimes and Boening (2021) andConnell (2018),it is very vital for the library to utilize theuse of the web by designing and deploying an effectivelibrary website if it must continue to play its role in providingrelevant and accurate information.

Although the advent of ICT has affected the role andservices of libraries including the academic libraries, it hasalso brought about some revolutionaries in the library as wellas the academic library. In fact, according to Etim (2016), therapid pace of development in the field of InformationTechnology (IT) and the emergence of networkedinformation services have prompted a comprehensive review of the library; specifically, the academic library andinformation science profession. While the developedcountries are far in front, the developing countries includingNigeria is still far behind with much more work torevolutionize the academic libraries in Nigeria. In Nigeria,the academic libraries are said to be at a crossroads due to thefact that they are operating in an era of dwindling financialresources that are not forthcoming andthus affects theefficiency and effectiveness of their functions.

The librariesespecially the academic librarieshave need to adapt to the environmentin line with the indications of Kumar (2019) ifthey are to remain relevant. Academic libraries are nowexpected to provide to users a range of information andcommunication technologies and e-resources necessary forretrieving information quickly from both immediate andremote databases, as well as creating a need for librarycooperation and consortium initiatives (Okiy, 2016).

3.0 Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was a cross-sectional survey design. The information data were primary (administration of the questionnaire) and secondary (already existing information from the library, Federal Polytechnic Ilaro). The population of study are Federal Polytechnic Ilaro students, with a population of over 6,449 students for the academic year 2021–2022. Students' data (their library attendance) will be collected over the course of twelve months (July 2021 to June 2022). To collect information from randomly selected Federal Polytechnic Ilaro students, 150 well-structured questionnaires titled "The Assessment of Patronage of Academic Libraries among Federal Polytechnic Ilaro Students" were used. A total of 120 (80%) respondents responded to the questionnaire items. The questionnaires were administered and collected using research assistants. The results of the findings were analyzed using a frequency table and percentages. The questionnaire was based on three factors: "Agree, Disagree, and Undecided"—ADU. The result analysis is done based on the output of those aforementioned parameters.

4.0 Result and Findings

Table 1: The frequency rate indicates the library usage data of students over the course of twelve months (July 2021 to June 2022)

MONTH	NUMBER OF STUDENTS USING THE LIBRARY PER MONTH
July, 2021	2,532
August, 2021	1,441
September, 2021	278
October, 2021	677
November, 2021	2,875
December, 2021	1,622
January, 2022	588
February, 2022	1,120
March, 2022	976
April, 2022	617
May, 2022	2,025
June, 2022	1,823
TOTAL	**16,567**

The data from table 1 above indicates the total number of students that made use of the school library at Federal Polytechnic Ilaro over the course of twelve months (July 2021 to June 2022). The school housed more than 6,449 students across various courses of study. The study revealed that the students made use of the library more during the period that their examinations were near. The school ran examinations on three different occasions between July 2021 and June 2022. There was an examination in August, 2021; November–December, 2021; and May–June, 2022. During these aforementioned periods, the school library recorded a high turn-out from the students as they visited the library in order to prepare ahead for their exams and also while the examinations were on-going. In the month of July 2021, out of the 6,449 students in school, 2,532 visited the library. While the month of August 2021 recorded 1,441 students at the library, the month of September 2021 recorded a very low turn-out of students as part of the month was also their holiday.For this reason, only 278 students visited the library in September 2021, while 677 students visited the library in October 2021. In the months of November and December, 2021, which were examination periods, the library recorded a student turn-out of 2,875 and 1,622 students, respectively. For the months of January and February 2022, the number of students that used the school library was 588 and 1,120, respectively. Furthermore, in the months of March and April 2022, which were filled with lectures, 976 and 617 students, respectively, used the library. In contrast with the fact that the total population of students in the school is over 6,449, the turn-out of students at the school library during the beginning of a semester or off-examination period was very low. May and June, 2022 were another examination period. The students, as expected, prefer to study in the library where there is serenity than to stay at their lodges or hostels. May and June, 2022, thus marked a high of 2,025 and 1,823, respectively. It becomes evident from these study results that students lean on the academic library and its resources during examination periods (a time of urgent and paramount need). Also, the number of library users among the students when compared with the total population of students in the school is low. The highest turn-out was 2,875 in the month of November, 2021, and that figure compared with the total population was below the average. Due to their ICT know-how, the majority of the students would prefer to keep in touch with phones, laptops, etc., where they

can access several materials via Google and other search engines, rather than visit the library. This outcome propelled the reason for the adoption of a cross-sectional survey design.

Table 2: TheFrequency rate indicates the relevance and likelihood of success for academic libraries

S/N	*Options*	*U*		*D*		*A*	
1	Course materials in the library are UpToDate	*27*	*22.5%*	*25*	*20.8%*	*70*	*58.3%*
2	The library is a very conducive place to read	*22*	*18.3%*	*0*	*0%*	*98*	*81.7%*
3	I made consistent usage of the school library	*41*	*34.2%*	*27*	*22.5%*	*52*	*43.3%*
4	It makes knowledge wider	*42*	*35%*	*18*	*15%*	*60*	*91.7%*
5	ICT is the way forward and the academic libraries should digitalise their materials	*7*	*8.4%*	*2*	*1.7%*	*111*	*92.5%*

Source: Field Survey, August, 2022

Table 2 above shows the frequency rate of the relevance and likelihood of success for academic libraries. The data reveals that 58.3% of the respondents agreed that course materials in the library are up-to-date, while 20.8% of the respondents disagreed. A significant 81.7% of the respondents also opined that the library is a very conducive place to read, while none of the respondents disagreed with the point. 43.3% of the respondents indicated that they made consistent use of the school library. 34.2% of the respondents were undecided, while 22.5% disagreed. Also, 50% of the respondents opinionated that academic libraries make knowledge more widely available, while 15% of the respondents disagreed. Finally, 92.5% of the respondents opinionated that ICT is the way forward and the academic libraries should digitalise their materialswhile the respondents that disagreed and remained undecided were 1.7% and 8.4% respectively. According to the overall results, nearly half of the respondents were either unsure or disagreed that academic libraries provided up-to-date materials. And furthermore, most of them were not used to library usage or acknowledged that it makes knowledge wider. However, vast majority of them opinionated that the library was a conducive place to read and ICT integration and adoption by academic libraries is the way forward towards having a consistent library usage by students and other users alike.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

It was discovered from the study's findings that the students' school population against the library usage was not very encouraging as the students tended to make use of the library more during the examination period. Even at that, the average number of the students' total population exceeds that of the highest monthly turn-out of the students. Based on the findings, it is necessary for academic libraries to mend the gap by incorporating technology, which is the attracting factor among students and youth alike. Making their materials electronic (digitalised) so that students and other users can have easy and quick access to them should be the first step towards a paradigm shift. This will give a lasting facelift to the academic library. Conclusively, if academic libraries are to meet the expectations of the planned vision of the library, the government will need to pay attention to education by improving their commitment to education. In addition, the need for periodic training for librarians and library staff cannot be overemphasized. Lastly,these recommendations will set the country's direction towards the "education for all initiative." This is much more attainable with well-funded academic library and information services and trained librarians equipped with strategies to provide services via e-resources in both physical and remote locations.

Recommendations

For academic libraries to provide the desired information services to students and their respective communities at large that will match the requirements of this ICT age, emphasis should shift towards:

- ✓ More emphasis should be placed on the provision of online access andservices such as OPAC, e-journals, e-books, and networked informationservices.
- ✓ Academic libraries should explore more alternative sources of funding asover reliance on thegovernment on monies that are not forthcoming maynot provide the desired solutions.
- ✓ New initiatives are required in the form of consultancy services,marketing of information productsas well as other income generatingservices.
- ✓ The need for the committees of university librarians, and theircounterparts in polytechnics and colleges to sensitize their respectiveinstitution's administrators on the central role of academiclibraries inteaching, learning and research activities in academic communities.
- ✓ Improvement in ICTs such as the Internet, Intranet, hardware andsoftware as well as Internet bandwidth.
- ✓ The need for the Nigerian Library Association to be proactive in the 21stcentury.
- ✓ Improvement in ICT training for academic librarians.
- ✓ Finally, government must realize the central role of academic libraries tonational development which requires provision of more funds foracademic library development in the country.

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