Students' Utilization of Academic Libraries in Nigeria: A Case Study of Federal University of Technology, Akure Between Year 2001-2005

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Abstract: The fact that Academic Libraries are only effective if only we understand all that surround them. That means coming to grips with the purpose of higher education in rhetoric and in fact the structure imposed upon higher education for educational development of any country. Like other earlier findings on Academic Libraries usage in Nigeria, the result of the study shows that majority of the users of the Federal University of Technology, Akure Library were students (undergraduates and postgraduates). Other users whom were very few are lecturers and other information seekers from outside the campus but their statistics were not kept by the porters. Result of the study shows that students patronized the library services heavily during their exams period or occasionally when they are given assignment. Also, the cumulative attendance of students that registered newly and renew their cards were very low.

Key words: Academic libaries, higher education, student's utilization, case study, FUTA

INTRODUCTION

The Federal University of Technology, Akure (FUTA) was established in the year 1981 by an Act of Parliament which was later replaced by the Federal University of technology Decree Number 13 of 1986 (2007). The University currently occupies 630 ha of land on the old Federal Polytechnic site. The mission of the University is to promote technological advancement of Nigeria through emphasis on programmes that will engender the development of such product and services in which the Nations possesses great comparative advantage. As of the year 2007, the University made is up of five different schools with population of students over twenty thousand. The University library which took off the same year has now moved to the new ultramodern library complex which has state of the art facilities to further support the teaching and research activities of the University. Currently, the library holds 60,000 volumes of books, 37 local journal titles, 16 foreign journal titles and 1,712 bound volumes. It has recently installed and put into operation some ICT facilities donated by Open Society Initiative of West Africa (OSIWA).

The fact that the library is an integral component of the mission of every University, it is then incumbent upon academic librarians to understand the changes that are taking place in higher education. Some of the changes as we will see have a direct impact on the library and its services. These include alterations in the Institution curricula, demographic changes in the students' populations and additions to the media used in the classroom and in support of research. The first and most important of the changes is the realm of financial support. The simple explanation for this problem is that support from public or other external sources has dwindled as the cost of running Universities have increased.

For much of the twentieth century, a typical University student was between 18 and 22 years old and was attending school full-time. As we have already known, with the economic down turns of 1980's and 1990's, come a revision of the model for typical student. Wagner and Kapper (1988) opined that what becomes evident about nontraditional student was that many individuals who were classified in this group were first generation attendees of higher education. They also averred that backgrounds may be different from the backgrounds of those who have traditionally matriculated into the academic world, which usually requires both individual and Institutional adjustment of the students' for them to succeed. In the last two decades, most higher Institutions have been experiencing some general changes that have had an impact on most Universities and this was supported by Atkins (1991), when he pointed out in one of his research findings that students are gravitating to less traditional and more into professional areas of study.

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Ogunkoya (2002) in his article titled "In Defense of ASUU" stressed the need for academic library and its services: He wrote:

The advancement of an academic staff unlike
Other staff depend largely if not almost entirely
On his research out put which depends critically
On the availability of suitable facilities including
Adequate library services.

Ikokoa (1998) contended that Library use as an activity is which still the most valid measure of an item of worth to a library or information system. The evaluation of the use of the academic libraries is a component of the planning process that provides librarians with feedback to improve the total effectiveness of the academic libraries in response to the needs and wants of their target user.

It is one of the assumptions of librarians that their collections are used by their patrons intensively. This assumption is more pronounced in academic libraries which are set up to support the teaching and research programmes run by the Institution of higher learning. The unavailability syndrome and barriers to the accessibility of scientific journals and books in the academic libraries is well documented (National University Commission, 1990; Omotayo, 1997). According to NUC (1990), about 90% of the book collections in Nigerian Universities are foreign materials and according to another study, many of the donated materials were of no significant value.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The subjects of this study are the Federal University of Technology, Akure Students (male and female), undergraduates and postgraduates, lecturers and other outsider users of the library.

The student's attendance register kept by the porter and a 15 items questionnaire was drawn up with some probing questions to elicit from the students their perception of the use of the library as source of Information for enhancement of their studies in the University. Five hundred copies of the questionnaire prepared and were administered randomly to student visiting the library, 475 copies; representing 95% were duly completed, returned and used for this study.

The success recorded in the questionnaire administer was because it was given to student coming to the library, at one time or the other to access information. In case of the lecturers and other users from outside, oral interview were used for them. Simple percentages were used to analyse the data collected as shown in the Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of respondents

S/N	Characteristics	Identity	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Sex	Male	275	57.89
		Female	200	42.11
2.	Marital Status	Married	86	18.11
		Single	389	81.89
3.	Academic Qualifications	Undergraduates	300	63.16
		Lecturers	86	18.11
		Others	89	18.74
4	Discipline (Faculties/School)	SOS	140	29.47
		SAAT	125	26.32
		SET	80	16.84
		SEET	75	15.79
		SMES	55	11.58
5.	Library registration	Registered	386	81.26
		Unregistered	89	18.74

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study shows from table one that the percentage of sex making use of the library is almost in ratio of 4:6 approximately i.e. (Female: Male). This finding is a result of the fact that more male students are in the University when compared with their female sex.

As regard the issue of marital status, the unmarried statistics (single) has the highest percentages of 81.89, this shows that majority of the students prefer to remain single (either male/female) in the course of that educational development or career.

Also, looking at the identity of users of the library under the period of study, one could see that the highest percentage of them is undergraduates. This simply implies that these set of student forms the largest groups within the University as regard the total enrolments of students' population in the Federal University of Technology, Akure.

The geometrical growth of area of disciplines i.e., SMES to SOS (11.58-29.47%) shows that the School of Sciences (SOS) has more Department and students populations than all the other remaining schools at individual school level.

From Table 1, 81.26% of the students whose questionnaires were administered to, said that they were registered with the library. This simply implies that majority of the students, adhered strictly to the rules and regulation guiding the library services within the University, while the rest whose percentage was just less than 2% may be said to be the ones that runs foul of the rules of the library.

The analysis from Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents based on the frequency of use of the Federal University of Technology, Akure Library. Results shows that 82 students used the library on daily basis out of the 475 respondents, this shows that very low percentage of the students are really serious library user. In fact the

Table 2: Frequency of the use of University Library

Frequency of use	No. of respondents	Percentage
Daily	82	17.36
2-4 times	20	4.21
Once a week	70	14.74
Occasionally	202	42.53
Not at all	101	21.26
Total	475	100.26

Table 3:Reasons for using Federal University of Technology, Akure Library

Reason	Frequency	Percentage
Research purpose	95	20.00
Examination	310	65.26
Recreation	10	2.11
Class preparation	60	12.63
Total	474	100%

highest percentage of 42.53% (202 respondents) occasional came into the library when the need arises. This simply shows the reading culture of Nigerian students i.e., majority of them only patronize the library only when they are given specific assignment to do. In the study by Olanlokun (1983), on "Use of Library" 59.9% of the Faculty students' used the library once a week, which is far better than what was obtained in this study.

Table 3 shows the reasons for using Federal University of Technology Library, Akure by the students. From the analysis one could see that, the highest number of the students 310 (65.26%) come in during the semester examinations. This is closely followed by those who are preparing and writing their research projects. It then means students would not have come to make use of the library facilities if not for the examination and the research work which they must pass before graduating from the University. This findings clearly bring into limelight the reading culture of Nigerian students of nowadays, which is quite differ from what obtained in the Nigerian Education sector in the 1960s' and below.

CONCLUSION

The Nigerian Education Sector, in particular Nigerian Universities are yet to recover from the economic down turn of the 1980's and the subsequent impact of this is the under-funding of the University Libraries. Arising from the above is the crisis facing the Nigerian University Library and the book industry which has been reported by many authors (Ojuade and Ochai, 2000; Adesina, 1990).

Results of this research showed the low patronage of the library outside the examination and research period by the generality of the students of this University. The result also showed that a miserably low of 2.11% of the respondents read for recreation/pleasure in the library. The quest for post-graduate studies seemed to be the driving force behind the library usage of 20.00% as regard

research purposes. This could easily be the reasons why the respondents used the library in the cases where they were pursuing their higher degrees.

For University Libraries generally to meet the expectation of its clientele and the current wave of technological developments of the Institutions, there must be the need for increase funding for libraries. Doing this, will avoid the management of these libraries to subscribe to current and latest relevant journals and textbooks that are relevant to courses run by their Institutions.

Finally, University libraries should as a matter of urgency acquire electronic medial resources; CD-ROM/Computer Services in additional to internet information facilities.

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