Civilizing the Library User in an Academic System

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Abstract

To civilize the library user in an academic base system means educating the student via a structured library user education procedure. The inability of students to use the library as expected is a problem. The objective of this study was to promote student library usage via the mechanics of effective library user education services. Therefore, the specific objectives were to find out the available user education methods used by the college library of Federal College of Education Zaria, and to also find out the possible ways to improving user education services of the library. The population of the study constituted the professional library staff. And case study method was used, alongside interview as an instrument for data collection. Data collected was analyzed using simple frequency and percentage of responses. Findings of the study indicated that five methods were readily in place for educating students in the use of the college library. Other improved methods were also suggested by the library staff. The study concluded on the note that the majority of the professional library staff (77.8%) are bachelor degree holders in library studies. Among recommendations given were the use of online platforms such as library website, and social media, among others.

Subject Areas

Education, Library, Intelligence and Philology

Keywords

Academic Library, Education, Student, Teaching Method

1. Introduction

Educating the students in an academic setting is a difficult task without an effective library system. Students' areas of specialization are better accomplished

when the institution has an effective and efficient library. And to whatever extent the academic library is equipped with information resources, the library must educate its users to ease usage of these resources available in the library. Information resources or library collections can be viewed as items containing information. Information resources include all forms of information carriers used to promote and encourage effective research activities and developmental projects [1]. To another scholar, library collection is the sum of books and materials owned by a library [2]. The information resources for use within the academic library environment are in printed and non-printed/electronic formats, which are accessible via traditional card catalogue, index, abstract, CD, computerized access; OPAC and electronic databases. The printed ones are those library items that are printed on paper, consisting of books, periodicals; journals, magazines, newspapers, government publications, theses/projects, graphics, maps and atlases, etc. Books are written by one or several authors and may appear in a single volume or in multiple volumes, periodicals also called serials are publications characterized as regular or irregular intervals and are meant to continue for an indefinite period. Other printed materials such as government publications, theses/projects, and other reference collections; maps atlases, almanac, directories etc. are consultation library resources. Non-printed materials mostly referred to as media resources or electronic resources are characterized by the art of computer processing in audio, visual and audio-visual formats. Audio resources are sound recordings produced on magnetic tapes that require auditory senses for their use: examples are Mp3, CD audio, etc. Visual resources are collections that require visualization: photographic, three-dimensional objects, microfilm, painting, projector and other information bearing resources that the eye can focus on to obtain information are good examples of the visual materials (electronic books and electronic databases for example). The Audio-Visual materials combine both the auditory and the visual: instances of this material include film, slides, videotapes, video cassettes, video compact disk (VCD), DVD etc.

2. Statement of Problem

Users' utilization of information resources is the sole goal of the library. In a relative review, several students in some Nigerian colleges of education were found to be ignorant of the basic idea of how to register as library members, some were even unaware of the fact that books could be borrowed, while others found it quite hard to even retrieve the information they needed [3]. This problem is exactly the case with students of Federal College of Education Zaria, which means that there is a failure in the use of the library information resources. Hence, the need for educating the students becomes paramount important through devised user education procedures.

3. Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to promote student library usage of infor-

mation resources via the mechanics of effective library user education services. The following specific objectives were set out:

1) To find out the available user education methods used by the college library of Federal College of Education Zaria.

2) And to also find out the possible ways to improving user education services of the college library under study.

4. Significance of the Study

The importance of this study discerns from two considerations. First, it will be an evaluating meter for the institution under study to identify its area of strength and weaknesses in library user education, for the purpose of improved library usage. And secondly, the study will add value to existing literatures in educating library users.

5. Literature Review

There are situations where most students go through the university but never make use of the library throughout their stay in the university, and to lament on this, a lecturer observed in her second year in university, meeting final year student who neither testified making use of the library nor knew where the library was situated [4]. In observing whether if the student lack orientation program, she concluded that there are many students like; and that, the orientation program of some academic institutions is very poor thereby making a lot of students uninterested in it, and the adverse effect is students lack of knowledge on the use of the library. Another study investigated library user education program among Lagos state university students, and 1000 students were selected via stratified random sampling [5]. Through an administered questionnaire, 866 copies were retrieved, and about 83% of the students showed that library instruction course content was adequate enough in enhancing their effective use of library resources and facilities. But almost half of the students lamented to the issue of time table scheduled for the use of library course as not convenient. Maybe, the time for instruction on library use could be clashing with students' departmental lecture hours, which directly or indirectly will affect the student usage of library resources. Similarly, a study on the relevancy of library user education on the best methods to the use of academic libraries by students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria have been investigated, were 190 students randomly selected revealed that library user education has really affected the usage of library tools and resources [6]. The user education methods employed included lectures and library orientation. A study also investigated the influence of two user education programs on the acquisition of library skills by students of Abia State University Uturu (ABSU) and Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO), both in southern part of Nigeria [7]. Findings indicated some of the major contents on the curricula of library instruction in the two institutions to include instructions on library resources, and on another hand, techniques of library use, were facili-

tators of the user education program made use of either writing boards or books and pamphlets. Although, lecture methods were found taught by mostly master qualification librarians. However, students of ABSU and FUTO in one way or the other indicated their skills acquired after the user education program, and these included: use of catalogue, borrowing of books, location of materials, and citation references among others. In line, a scholar in an exploration study assessed the effect of library education program on undergraduate students in selected universities in southern part of Nigeria [8]. Findings of the study revealed some university libraries adopted curriculum-based use of library and orientation of users as most basic methods for library user education. Unfortunately, other user education methods such as tutorial, staff guidance and library handbook were less used by information professional to educate the library users. Another scholar too investigated particularly on the influence of library environment and user education on undergraduates' use of a university central library at University of Ibadan, Nigeria [9]. Methods found in place for delivering user education were library orientation for new students (64.3%), use of library course (53.4%), and guided library tour (40.4%); whereas methods found ineffective for user education program in the university library were: basic bibliographic instruction, advanced bibliographic instruction, and one-on-one library use instruction. Last but not the least, on the importance of library user education, a study was carried on the effect of user education on law students' use of the faculty law library at Imo State University, Owerri [10]. And findings of the study showed that Imo State University law students have understanding of the concept of user education, and it has positively affected their use of the library and their academic performance. The students also agreed that demonstration, lecture, library tour, and library orientation were the mediums used in teaching them usage of the university library.

6. Methodology

A Case study method was adopted to investigate the teaching and learning processes of educating the library user in college library of Federal College of Education (FCE) Zaria. Concerning the population, the total 18 professional library staff were purposefully sampled as against the other library staff categories in the library. The instrumentation for data collection was an interview, and data were analyzed using simple frequency and percentage of responses.

7. Discussion of Findings

7.1. Education of the Professional Library Staff, FCE Zaria

From the responses to this question, it is justifiable that majority of the professional library staffs in FCE Zaria, indicated by 14 of 18 (77.8%) hold Bachelor degree in library and information science. 3 out of the 18 staff (16.7%) had their Masters in the library field, whereas, only one staff represented by 5.6% had a Doctorate degree. However, this finding is an indication that the professional li-

brary staff in FCE Zaria are to an extent capable of educating students on the use of library. In fact, for a person to be called a librarian, he/she must possess at least a bachelor degree in library studies.

7.2. Library User Education Methods Used by FCE Zaria Library in Educating Students' Usage

Results as obtained from the professional library staff indicated certain types of user education methods were in used in facilitating students' usage of the library. This is as follows: lecture method and compulsory library course with credit unit had 18 of 18 (100%) replies each; library handbook and library tour also had similar scores of 17 of 18 represented by 94.4% each. Last but not the least, the use of library guides had 16 of 18 (88.9%) scores. Although, exhibition method was merely present with a score of 1 respondent, represented by 5.6%, on the other hand, other methods such as bibliographic instruction, workshop, pamphlets, one-on-one mentoring, library website, web-based user instruction, and orientation week were not found in use by the FCE library. However, there is three-tier structure of user education from the responses of both librarians and experts of the university libraries in Pakistan [11]. Among these three-tier structures consist of basic bibliographic instruction and advanced bibliographic instruction. The author further caution on the need for new, more effective methods of education in developing countries, which will involve new ideas and new technology (such as the web-based user instruction) in libraries.

7.3. Suggested Means for Improved Library User Education Services in FCE Zaria Library

In the opinion of the professional library staffs, they welcomed the idea of three certain measures for improved library user education services in their library. In a finding, all the 18 sampled staff pointed on "library instruction course on request base" and "time to time awareness creation" as vital methods for the library. And 17 of 18 (94.4%) suggested re-design of the library's instruction curricula on user education. However, this is a welcome development to speak well of. Vital procedures essential for library user education design include: 1) Use of mass media *i.e.* radio, television, AV cassette, video programs prepared for users, and 2) Organizing talks of experts, seminars, debate, and cultural programs to attract the users [12].

8. Conclusion

The study investigated pedagogical methods for helping students in the use of FCE Zaria library. Findings of the study categorically indicated five methods were readily available as library user education methods. They are lecture method, compulsory library course with credit unit, library handbook, library tour, and library guides. Besides, the professional library staff of FCE Zaria suggested means for improved library user education included the followings: library instruction course on request base, time to time awareness creation, and re-design

of the library's instruction curricula. To this end, the majority of the professional library staff (77.8%) are bachelor degree holders in library studies.

9. Recommendations

Based on the study finding the following recommendations were made:

1) Library user education methods that are not found in use by the library, such as, one on one mentoring, bibliographic instruction, newsletter, exhibition methods, etc., the library should implement their use.

2) The use of conventional methods in educating students in their use of library is not bad to say, but there is also need for the college library under study to inculcate the use of online platforms. For example, library websites, social media, etc.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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