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LIBRARY - USE SKILLS OF NEW UNDERGRADUATES AND LIBRARY ORIENTATION PROGRAMME AT UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN.

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Abstract

Survey data were used to investigate the Library - use skills possessed by the new undergraduates of University of Ibadan before they gained admission into the institution. Five hundred copies of the questionnaire were administered to the newly set of students admitted for the 2000/2001 academic session. Analysis shows that most students lacked the basic library skills of catalogue use, locating information by the aid of classification number, and the use of computer to access information. The timing, the duration and the content of the library orientation programme are not well planned to make the programme beneficiary to the students. The paper recommends aggressive instruction on library use that will be practical oriented to help the students acquire the lacked skills. More time should be given to the programme and it should be conducted at a period when most students would have completed their registration.

Introduction

One of the fundamental laws of the library is that the resources - books and non-books must be well consulted. The librarians have to acquire and provide access to the information stocked in their libraries. The problem of locating information in the pool of resources in the library in this age of information explosion has necessitated the introduction of Library use education in our higher institutions of learning. The importance of teaching users skills of locating information in the libraries was so much appreciated in the developed countries that library use skills are taught right from the primary school level. The Nigerian situation is not different as the library period is supposed to feature on our school time-tables purposely to allow the students to visit their libraries. This creates opportunity for the students to independently use the library and for interaction with their teacher - librarian to impart necessary instruction on library use.

There seems to be a consensus on the education of library users worldwide. Bodies like Austral-

ian Bibliographic Network (ABN), User Education resources (USER), Library Instruction Materials bank (LIMB) and a host of others were established with the mandate of coordinating and overseeing the development of user education programmes.

The User Education Programme has so much been considered necessary as part of the students education programme that all Nigerian Universities libraries have one organized programme or the other practiced to enable library users to acquire skills that will allow them to use the library resources effectively.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LIBRARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES.

Libraries in Universities are established with the objectives of providing teaching, research and learning materials for both the students and the staff in the University Community.

Various approaches have been made in our Universities to reduce the ignorance of the Library Users in the use of the library materials. Such effort would definitely make the students to be independent as they acquire the knowledge and the skills that will make them locate information in their chosen field of study.

In University of Ibadan for example, students have always been introduced to the library since the inception of the University. According to Akinyode¹, the programme which was tagged, "introduction to the library" has however been advanced to what is now called, Library Orientation Programme. Young² as far back as 1966 has described the introduction of an orientation course in library use by Ahmadu Bello University library as part of orientation programme for the new students. Nwoye and Anafulu³ wrote about user education programme in the form of library instruction in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. According to the authors, the programme is a credit-earning and compulsory course. Olaniyan, Arikebi and Ugonna⁴ wrote that Instruction Programme of the University of Lagos has been integrated into the school curriculum as far back as 1973. According to them, the programme was introduced to teach the new students on the effective use of the library materials. Today, all Nigerian University libraries have programmes for their new students which is basically to teach them use of the library materials.

During the 1992/93 academic Session, about a decade ago, Edem and Lawal⁵ conducted a study on how to improve user education programme in Nigerian University Libraries. They mailed thirty-five questionnaires to university librarians in all Nigerian Universities and they got a very good response. From their findings, they reported that all the respondents showed that user education programme exist in their libraries.

THE PRACTICE OF LIBRARY ORIENTATION PROGRAMME AT UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN.

Akinyode⁶ in his study on the problems of user education in Ibadan University library wrote that the practice of teaching the use of the library to the new intakes into the university started since the inception of the institution. The yearly library orientation programme commences at the beginning of each academic session before the commencement of the classes. The Programme normally lasts for 3 - 4 days - and it features events like Talk, Exhibition, Demonstration and Guided Tour. An important aspect of the programme is the Talk which is always given by the University Librarian or his representative.

The Talk introduces the new students to the library, its collections, Services and the rules and regulations guiding its use. The students come to the library in groups and each group is allowed to undergo the training for not more than 3 - hours as the time table stipulated.

After the talk is delivered, the students are divided into smaller groups of about 50 to be conducted round the sections in the library by a library officer. The officer explains the operations of each section to the students and answers their queries.

The demonstration aspect (using computer) is taken care of by the demonstrator highlighting some information as recorded in the computer while the talk is being given. Exhibition of some important library materials (print and non-print) is done within the period of the orientation. The use of the catalogue and how to locate materials are also explained to the students during the programme. The programme ends by allowing the students to register at the circulation desk.

At university of Ibadan library, the design of the library orientation programme curriculum to instruct students on how to use the library is based on the assumption that the new undergraduates have been using the library from their former schools and as a result of this, they must have acquired some rudimentary skills of library use. Shaibu⁷ corroborates this fact when he stated that : "Nigerian Schools operate with official lesson time schedules, within which there are library period slots for teaching students library and Information Skills". It was on this premise that the curriculum of the library orientation programme was planned without actually finding out the entry behaviour of the new undergraduates in the use of library.

THE PROBLEM.

This study is based on the premise that despite annual orientation programme designed to teach use of library, experience have shown that the students continue to encounter difficulties in getting easy access to library resources. They feel incompetent and consider their library skills inadequate even after the library orientation programme. The kinds of questions they asked the librarians and their attitude to use of the catalogue are all indications that the programme is yet to achieve the desired result. The inadequacy of the library orientation programme of university of Ibadan have earlier been expressed by authours like Soyinka⁸ and Akinyode⁹ without any

empirical study to investigate their claim. This study is therefore, a self-evaluative study which is designed with a view to determining the skills acquired by the undergraduates in their former schools to be able to determine at what level the instruction on library use skills for them should commence. The study will reveal whether what is being taught to the students within the 3-days of orientation programme is adequate for them to benefit at the level of the knowledge they had or not. Such study is necessary to enhance library operations in a constantly changing academic environments as buttressed by Fowowe¹⁰ when he states that: "The library can fulfil its function best by pursuing a policy of constant self-evaluation in order to be alert to the changing needs of its users"

OBJECTIVES

A major objective of the study is to find library - use skills of the fresh undergraduates and the adequacy of the Library Orientation Programme organized by the University of Ibadan Library. Specifically, the study is carried out to find out:

1. The state of the library collections in the undergraduates' former schools: (ii) the frequency of their library use; (iii) the classifications schemes they were familiar with: (iv) how they locate information in their libraries; (v) the information tools they have independently used; and (iv) the students assessment of the programme.

METHODOLOGY

The survey design method was used for the study. Data was collected through structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to gather information from the new undergraduates on the previous knowledge and the Library-Use skills they have acquired in their secondary schools, their frequency of use of the library, the tools they have well mastered, and how they used to locate information in the library.

The populations consist of 3,400 new undergraduate students admitted into the various faculties for the 2000/2001 academic session. The sample is of 500 students randomly selected from the population.

The questionnaire was administered personally to the students as they were registering in the library on a random basis. They filled the questionnaire and returned it on the spot. The number of respondents totaled 500 and this number represent more than 10 percent of the number of students admitted for the 2000/2001 academic session as statistics in the admission office has revealed. The study was undertaken after the library orientation programme and the result were analysed using percentages and tables.

Discussion of Results

State of The Library Collections.

Responses in table 1 show that the majority of new undergraduates came from schools with libraries well stocked with current materials.

As the table revealed, 436 (87.2 percent) of respondents indicated that their libraries were well