

LAGOS JOURNAL OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE

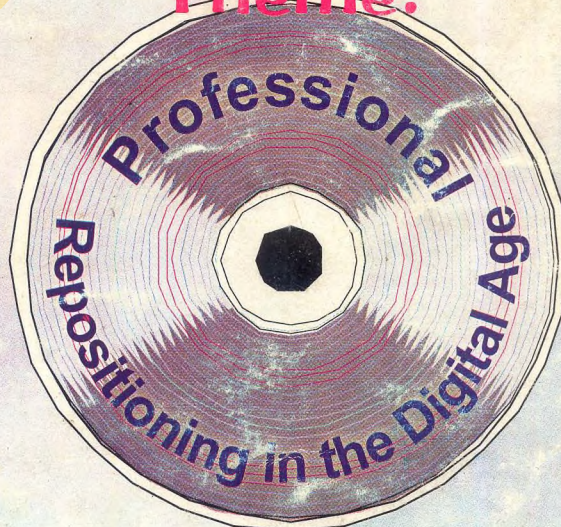
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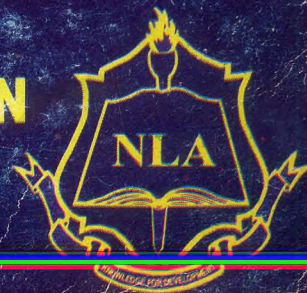
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Lagos Journal of Library and Information Science aims to be a world class professional and scholarship journal.

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- * To serve as a vehicle for the dissemination of research results.
- * To provide a credible platform for scholarly communication.
- * To promote intellectual discourse among library, information, and other professionals in a multidisciplinary context.
- * To uphold the principles of professional excellence: originality, creativity and integrity.

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Patterns of First-year Students Use of a University Library: A Survey at University of Ibadan

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Keywords

Academic Libraries, First Year Students, Ibadan, Nigeria, User Survey

Abstract

This paper discusses the mode of use of University of Ibadan Library by first-year students of 2000/2001 academic session. The amount, the nature of use of the library and the barriers between the freshmen and the library are investigated and discussed. The findings reveal that the students heavily use the library to read their own books. The level of borrowing was very low and factors like non-relevance, disorganization of books and lack of basic library use skills were among the major barriers that inhibit the frequent use of the library by the students. Provision of current relevant books, teaching the students' library use skills through regular lectures and seminars are some recommendations suggested to solve the problems identified.

INTRODUCTION

Uppermost in the minds of University Librarians is the utilization of library services and resources. This is in realization of the role the library plays as an educational force. The library obviously supports the school in the process of developing an inquiring mind (Ray, 1990). According to Braimoh et al (1997), the consequences of the students' ability to use the library will include among other things, a serious debasement of the quality of university education, which may consequently have a negative effect on the job performance of the university products. A great deal of effort is being made to assist the in-coming new students into the university in the use of the library resources. Such attempt, which include introduction of user education is to build good library culture into the students right from the foundation of their university education. The need to define the patterns of use of the library and its materials as

demonstrated by undergraduates especially the freshmen is very significant because it would tell the librarians a lot about the library as the students see it. The findings would help to evaluate the library in terms of its services, programs (like library orientations annually organized for first-year undergraduates) and its collections. People assume that newcomers into the university academic environment have difficulties in assessing the resources of the library without empirical facts to prove it. The study is therefore designed to find out the barriers between students and the library, and the amount and the nature of the use which first-year undergraduate students make of university library.

SHORT BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN LIBRARY

The University of Ibadan Library, which now consists of Kenneth Dike Library as its main building, and 27 departmental/faculty libraries started in a temporary wooden block in 1948. The Library took off with 12,000 volumes and 300 current journals on open access. Today, the library contains about 500,000 volumes and receives over 6,000 journals and other serials.

The Library materials, which are on open-access and in closed collections are shelved in the main library and departmental libraries for circulations (borrowing) and consultations. The collections are developed to supply the information needs of the various faculties in the University for the purposes of learning and research. The students and the lecturers are free to make use of the library collections that are relevant to their needs in the main library and the departmental/faculty libraries after they are duly registered in the library.

Access to the documents in the libraries is made possible to users through the various catalogues in the libraries which serve as indexes to the library holdings. The materials in the library up till December 1974 were catalogued for easy arrangement and location by using Bliss Bibliographic/classification Scheme while the materials from January 1975 were classified by the Library of Congress Classification Scheme. Moys Classification Scheme is used for law materials while National Library of Medicine (N.L.M.) Classification Scheme is used in the Medical Library.

METHODOLOGY

The major instrument used to gather data for the study was questionnaire. Circulation records were also deserved to validate the information supplied by the

respondents. According to records obtained from the total population of the first-year students for the 2000/2001 academic session (the session the researcher was interested in) stood at 3,400. This figure spread across ten faculties: Science, Law, Education, Technology, Arts, Medical Sciences, Pharmacy, Veterinary Medicine, Agriculture and Forestry and Social Science. The study was undertaken at the middle of the second semester when the students were considered to have well settled on the campus for a serious academic work for the session. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires in the lecture rooms with the assistance of lecturers. The targeted lectures were those which brought students from different faculties together as this allowed a good representation of all the faculties. Such classes include: Physics, General Studies, Chemistry, Agriculture and English. A total of six hundred questionnaire were designed and randomly distributed to students in the lecture rooms to elicit information on such areas as: frequency of library use; purpose for using the library; reasons for not using the library; quality of books borrowed. The questionnaires were distributed to the students with the permission and assistance of the lecturers before commencement of the lessons which they filled and returned immediately. Out of the six hundred questionnaires administered, 473 were returned usable. This represents a total of 78.8%. The randomly sampling method employed in the distribution of the questionnaires ensured that all students across the faculties were equally represented in the sample as the response rate gave a high percentage of over 10% of the entire population. The representation of the various faculties is as shown in Table 1:

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from the questionnaire have been organized in relation to the scope of the survey as shown in Tables 1 to 6.

From Table 1 below, one can judge from the response rate (78.8 percent) that the students seemed to welcome the opportunity to give their views on the library. The

respondents were well represented in all the faculties as shown in the Table.

TABLE 1

Distribution of Respondents according to faculty

Faculty	Frequency (N = 473)	% of Respondents
Technology	66	14.0
Basic Medical Sciences	62	13.1
Science	56	11.8
Education	55	11.6
Arts	53	11.2
Social Sciences	52	11.0
Agriculture and Forestry	48	10.1
Veterinary Medicine	36	7.6
Law	25	5.3
Pharmacy	20	4.2
Total	473	100

When the respondents were asked to indicate the frequency of their library use, the responses presented in Table 2 show that most of the students make use of the library occasionally 151 (31.9 percent); while 115 (24.3 percent) patronize it daily; and 40 (8.50 percent) of the respondents visit the library once a week and 60 (12.7 percent) respondents never visited the library. From the facts in the table, it is evident that the great majority the first-year undergraduates did not heavily make use of the university library. This has implication for the teaching staff and the librarians. The lecturers can give assignments that will force the students to visit the library frequently and the staff needs to sensitize the students more on what the library stands to offer them.

TABLE 2: Frequency of Library Use

Frequency of Respondents	Frequency (N = 473)	% of use
Occasionally	151	31.9
Daily	116	24.3
Two or three times in a week	106	22.4
Never	66	12.7
Once a week	40	8.5
TOTAL	473	100

When the non-users and the irregular users were asked to indicate what constituted inhibitions to their use of the library, the responses given were as shown in Table 3. According to the Table, 150 (31.8 percent) respondents recognized lack of recommended textbooks on the shelves as the major inhibition to their patronage of the library. Obsolescence of the books is another obstacle to which 9 (9.4 percent) respondents indicated. When it comes to lack of organization of library materials for easy retrieval on the shelves, 71 (14.90 percent)

respondents were of the opinion that this is one of the inhibiting factor to library usage. It is interesting to note that 45 (9.4 percent) of the respondents made use of the departmental libraries more than the main library. The implication of this is that the library should give more attention to the development of the departmental libraries. This can be done by providing current and up-to-date materials and a well capable qualified staff to man them. This will help to reduce the congestion experienced from time to time in the main library.

Table 3: Major Inhibitors to Library Use

Inhibitors	Frequency (N = 473)	% of Respondents
Lack of recommended books on the shelves	150	31.8
Library book obsolete	91	19.2
Disorganization of books	71	14.9
Satisfied with own books	54	11.4
Contented with departmental libraries	45	9.4
Lack library use skills	35	7.5
Not aware of library holdings	27	5.8
Total	473	100

When the respondents were asked to give reasons for their visits to the library, 228 (55.1 percent) respondents indicated that they go to the library to read their own books and lecture notes while 62 (14.9 percent) respondents visit the library to do assignments given to them by their lecturers. Only 9 (2.4 percent) and 1 (0.3 percent) respondents visit the library to borrow books and to do computer searching to retrieve information respectively. The facts are as shown in Table 4. The survey revealed that the major purpose for which the students used the library was, to read their books and lecture notes. This finding was to that of Lanes (1966)

that more than half of the freshmen were using only their books in the library. The low percentages of 2.4% and 0.3% of the respondents who borrowed library books and did computer searching respectively should be of concern to the library management. The library should provide current, relevant, recommended books for students use. This will help to overcome this greatest barrier which students gave as their reason for not using the library frequently as indicated in Table 2. The library orientation programme should include training on how to use computer to access information to assist the students to gain information-searching skill.

Table 4: Major purpose for which students use the library

Purpose	Frequency (N=473)	% of Respondents
To read own books and lecture notes	228	55.1
To read library books	62	14.9
To do assignments	42	10.1
To consult reference materials	38	9.2
To do research	33	8.0
To borrow books	9	2.4
To do CD-Rom search	1	0.3
TOTAL	413	100