

Evaluation of User Education Programmes and Resources used by Undergraduates of Two Selected Federal University Libraries in South East, Nigeria

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Abstract

his study evaluates user education programmes of two federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria, for enhanced access and use of digital resources. A population of 6,249 undergraduate users was studied using descriptive survey. A sample size of 376 was determined using Taro Yemen's formula. Data was obtained via questionnaire and quantitatively examined using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study reveal provision of library orientation ($\bar{x}=3.65$), course-related instruction ($=3.06$) individualised instruction ($=2.87$) and library tours ($=2.67$) to users of the libraries under study; the grand mean of 2.93 ($SD=1.00$) indicates that the programmes enhance users' access and use of digital resources to a high extent. This notwithstanding, inconsistent power supply and a lack of ICT infrastructure were identified challenges to the success of the programmes in the study area. However, a supportive environment and creative teaching

strategies were suggested for the programmes' effectiveness.

Keywords: User Education Programme, Academic Libraries, Digital Resources

Introduction

The digital revolution and the advancement of innovative information and communication channels deprived libraries of the monopolistic power of information providers to their member communities. Today most information seekers find little or no incentive to visit the library because they have access to other information sources/resources. Again, the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has resulted in the changing mode of information resources, making most library resources harder to access for users who lack the necessary abilities. According to Anene, Achebe and Uzochina (2020), with the rapid development of ICTs, accessing and retrieving information from libraries has become more difficult.

Access to library resources is the ability of the user to get in touch with the required material and use that material to meet his or her information needs. Currently, developments in computer technology have resulted in a vast expansion of library resources, posing considerable challenges to its access and use.

The majority of the library's present resources are now available in digital format, and new services such as digital libraries and institutional repositories have emerged as a result of the advent of digital technologies (Abubakar and Cholom, 2017). In most university libraries, the use of online cataloguing databases like the Library of Congress (LC) Cataloguing Scheme, Online Computer Library

Center (OCLC), and other platforms like TINLIB and Koha has increased, encouraging the use of Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) for greater visibility of library resources. The emerging developments in libraries pose major obstacles to library users due to inadequate skills to access and use information stored in electronic format.

The current method of information packaging necessitates the acquisition of fundamental skills in order to access and utilise the available information resources. Because a university library is one of the most sophisticated information systems, students can only get the most out of it if they are taught how to get the information they need through user education (Abubakar and Cholom, 2017). This agrees with Ejiroghene (2020) that library training (user education) is necessary to encourage effective and efficient exploration of library resources as well as build awareness for later usage of library resources. User education is a service in which librarians teach users the skills they need to explore the library and its resources effectively and independently. Users can access the service through a variety of educational programmes referred to as User Education Programmes (UEP). The UEP is a library-sponsored educational programme that teaches users how to access, and retrieve library resources within and outside the library in order to promote lifelong learning. According to Liu, Lo, and Isumura (2019) UEP educates and influences users' opinions and attitudes about library usage, as well as inspiring their search for knowledge, which is critical for individual and societal growth. Its primary goal is to educate to convey knowledge, skills, and attitudes that encourage users to make efficient use of library resources (Audu, Olokpo, Ohem, Nwafornso, and Ugela, 2020).

The need for a User Education Programme in Nigerian institutions of higher learning is greater, as the majority of students have no prior familiarity with libraries. Even if students have had prior library experience, the structure of the university library, the volume of resources, and their arrangement may be more complex, requiring users to be introduced to them. In his study, Lalithamma (2017) found that user education programmes have become increasingly important in modern times since recent educational trends have raised the need for library users to be assisted through both instruction and

practice. The expert goes on to say that fast advances in information acquisition and teaching methods have elevated the importance of user education by leaps and bounds. Furthermore, tremendous changes in technology and culture have generated an urgent need to teach users how to become more efficient and independent in their information searching (Okeke, 2017). Another issue that necessitates user education programmes is the expansion of interdisciplinary courses in higher education, which necessitates students being trained to be able to make efficient use of the wide range of resources accessible in the library (David-West, 2020).

Anyim (2018) acknowledged that user education contributed a lot in the past when Information and Communication Technologies have not taken over virtually every aspect of human endeavour, but argued that the method used to render the programme in the past could not adequately expose library resources adequately or assist users in accessing and retrieving information in modern libraries. Besides, overcrowding of library users, a lack of trained and skilled personnel, an insufficient number of computers for practical use, a lack of training and retraining of staff on ICT application and use, a lack of maintenance culture, a lack of infrastructure, epileptic power supply, and the limited time allocated to the programme are all factors that contributed to the programme's failure. The situation has put enormous strains on librarians working at federal university libraries under study.

The daily decrease in the number of customers in the libraries under study is alarming. The majority of the library's few customers are unfamiliar with the many areas and operations of the library, making it difficult for them to obtain the resources they require to meet their information needs; many of the customers are unable to use the library's OPAC or digital services. As a result, most users waste a significant amount of time at the library and, regrettably, depart it unsatisfactorily. The seriousness of these issues can invariably diminish the library's potential value and services, thus jeopardising the library's commitment to its parent institution in the long run. Researchers in the field of librarianship have expressed worry about the situation, prompting them to conduct a number of studies on user education in order to find ways to improve user education programmes. Among such studies are those

conducted by (Lalithamma, 2017); (David-West, 2020); (Omeluzor, Akibu, Dika, and Ukangwa, 2017); and Audu, Olokpo, Ohemu, Nwaforonso and Ugela (2020). To the best of the researchers' knowledge, none of the mentioned studies have focused explicitly on the two selected federal university libraries in the South East of Nigeria, specifically the University of Nigeria, Nsukka and the Federal University of Technology, Owerri. This context underlines the necessity to assess user education programmes in order to improve access to and use of digital information resources.

Statement of the Problem

Modern libraries are more digitalised, with the majority of their existing resources available in digital formats that require basic skills to access and retrieve. User education programmes are designed to provide users with the necessary skills to effectively explore the library and its resources, as well as to encourage users to visit the library. However, its influence in most libraries is currently unnoticed. The issue spurred the study's problem statement, which reads, "What is the state of user education programmes in modern libraries?" This demands this research into the evaluation of user education programmes aimed at improving undergraduate users' access to and use of digital information resources at the two federal university libraries.

Purpose of the Study

The study specifically seeks to:

1. identify the types of user education programmes that are provided to users of federal university libraries in Enugu and Imo state.
2. determine the extent to which effective user education programmes could enhance users access and use of digital resources in the libraries under study.
3. determine how often librarians in the study area provide user education programmes to users.
4. identify the challenges to effective user

education programmes in the libraries under study.

Significance of the Study

The findings of the study are expected to expose the worth of the library and create wider visibility and usage to its resources and services. To the library customers, it is expected to equip them with the basic skills for accessing and retrieving digital information resources from within and outside the library and introduced them to various technological gadgets for improved performance. The outcome of the study is anticipated to unveil the uniqueness of librarians as information scientist and not mere bookkeepers. The outcome of the study is expected to serve as a reference point to researchers of similar interest who may wish to embark on a related study. Finally, the findings of the study are expected to be useful to the entire nation as it will enable the university to produce high-quality graduates who will serve the country.

Literature Review

Library user education is crucial for strengthening information search, evaluation, and retrieval of digital information resources, as well as creating the atmosphere for effective life-long learning (Okeke, 2017). The service is intended to achieve two main objectives: short-term and long-term objectives. While the short-term goal is to assist users in completing their course: 'Use of Library and Study Skills (GSP111) and familiarising them with finding information in various sections of the library, the long-term goal is to raise awareness and understanding of a variety of new topics, such as communication principles and practices, the structure of specialist literature, and internal and external information; the short and long-term goals are then geared toward equipping library users with the necessary library use skills, allowing them to make efficient use of library resources. (Ilogho, Iroaganachi, and Osinulu, 2016).

Users are educated through a variety of educational programmes, including orientation, library tours, course-related instruction, course-integrated instruction, literature search programmes, and so on which are popularly known as user education programmes. Because their goal is to impart in library users the ability to use the library, exploit information resources, and retrieve needed

information with little aid and supervision from library employees, these programmes are critical for optimal utilisation of library resources (Audu, Olokpo, Ohemu, Nwaforonso and Ugela, 2020). The efficiency of the programmes, on the other hand, determines the extent to which users used the library and its resources. This supports David-West (2020) argument that the quality of user education programmes impacts the rate of library use and, as a result, promotes user satisfaction. This means that effective user education programmes are critical for improving library services and maintaining the library’s relevance to its users.

Despite this, user education in most libraries across the country is still poor, preventing potential users from benefiting from the programmes’ numerous benefits. This assertion concurs to the view of David-West (2020), that one of the major issues confronting many academic libraries across the country is how to organise user education more effectively to meet the diverse learning needs and expectations of students.

Because the quality of user education programmes determines the rate at which users patronise library resources and the maximum satisfaction they derive from library services, this study was created with the goal of evaluating the potentials of user education programmes to improve access and use of digital information resources in the study area. The rate of turnover in the use of library resources continues to decline on a daily basis in most libraries across the country, particularly in the study areas. The poor quality of user education in Nigerian libraries is counterproductive to the library’s goals. According to Ben-Bura (2015), one of the contributing causes to the poor nature of user education programmes in Nigerian libraries is a shortage of skilled staff and insufficient networked computers. Other challenges to the programme include, but are not limited to, a lack of required skills for the application and use of modern information and communication technologies, as well as technostress caused by the misuse of ICTs, which limits the effectiveness of ICTs in improving services in most organisations (Gaudioso, Turel, and Galimberti, 2017).

Methodology

This paper adopts a descriptive survey research design, to study a target population of six thousand two hundred and forty-nine (6,249) registered library users of 2020/2021 academic session of two federal university libraries (Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, (UNN); and the Federal University of Technology Owerri Library (FUTO) in South East Nigeria. The study’s population comprises three thousand two hundred and seventy-nine (3,279) users of UNN library and two thousand nine hundred and seventy (2970) users of FUTO library. (Source: 2020/2021 users’ registration register of the two libraries).

Taro Yamane’s formula i.e.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

(Where n = sample size; N = population; e = level of significance; 1 = constant); was adopted to determine a sample size of 376 for the study. However, because the population varied across the two libraries under study, Uzoagulu’s (1998) statistical

$$\text{formula } \frac{n}{N} = \frac{X}{1}$$

(Where n = sample size; N = population of the study; p = population of the sub components of the study; 1 = constant); was used to allocate a sampled population of 197 to UNN and 179 to FUTO.

Data was collected using a questionnaire. Out of the three hundred and seventy-six (376) copies of the questionnaire administered, three hundred and eleven (311) copies (163 from UNN and 148 from FUTO) were filled and used for the study.

Data were analysed using mean, and standard deviation techniques. Items with mean scores between 2.5 and above were accepted while those with mean scores below 2.5 were rejected. In a four-point rating scale, the weight of the response ranges from 4, 3, 2 and 1; the average is 2.5; which is the bench mark used for the analysis.

$$\text{i.e. } \frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 110}{4} = 2.5$$

The scope of this study is limited to users of Nnamdi Azikiwe Library, UNN, and the library, Federal University of Technology Owerri. It is also restricted to the variables identified in the purpose

of the study and research questions.

Research Question One: What types of user education programme are provided to users of the federal university libraries?

Table 1: Mean responses on the types of user education programme t

S/N	Items	HP	P	LP	NP	Response Weight	Mean	Std.	Decision
1	Library Orientation	225	66	16	4	1134	3.65	0.64	HP
2	Library Tour	76	110	72	53	831	2.67	1.03	P
3	Course Related instruction (GSP 111)	100	139	62	10	951	3.06	0.81	P
4	Course integrated instruction	53	105	115	38	795	2.56	0.91	P
5	Individualized instruction	123	83	47	58	893	2.87	1.13	P
6	Literature search programme	42	65	108	96	675	2.17	1.02	LP
	Grand Mean	103.2	94.7	70	43.2	880.1	2.83	1.04	P

Key: HP = Highly Provided, P = Provided, LP = Less Provided, Not Provided

Table 1 displays the mean response from respondents regarding the provision of each of the user education programmes in the study area. The table shows that, aside from literature search, all programmes have high mean scores that are higher than the 2.50 criterion mean. This resulted in a grand

mean of 2.83 (SD=1.04), indicating that user education programmes are provided in the study area.

Research Question Two: To what extent could user education programmes enhance users' access and use of digital resources in the libraries understudy?

Table 2: Extent to which user education programmes enhance users' access and use of digital resources in the libraries (N=311)

S/N	Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Response Weight	Mean	Std.	Decision
1	Library orientation helps users to be conversant with the various unit of the library	176	69	43	23	1020	3.28	0.96	VHE
2	Course-related instruction programmes enable users to easily access and retrieve digital information resources	123	83	83	22	929	2.99	0.97	HE
3	Literature search programme encourages independent use of library resources	94	111	86	20	901	2.90	0.91	HE
4	Library tour builds positive image about the academic library and its resources to users	69	94	90	58	796	2.56	1.03	HE
	Grand Mean	115.5	89.25	75.5	30.75	911.5	2.93	1.00	HE

Key: VHE = Very High Extent, HE = High Extent, LE = Low Extent, VLE = Very Low Extent

Table 2 shows the extent to which user education programmes enhance users' access and use of digital resources in the libraries under study. Data presented on the Table revealed a positive influence of user education programmes on users' access and use of digital resources in libraries. Out of the four programmes highlighted on the table, library orientation with a mean score of 3.28 enhances users' access and use of digital resources to a very high extent while others library tour, literature search and course-related instruction with mean range between

2.56 - 2.99 enhances users' access and use of digital resources to a high extent. Significantly, the grand mean generates a mean score of 2.93 (SD=1.00) indicating that user education programmes enhance users' access and use of digital resources to a high extent.

Research Question Three: How often do librarians in the study area provide user education programmes to users?

Table 3: Respondents mean responses on how often librarians in the study area provide user education programmes to users

S/N	Items	VO	O	LO	NO	Response Mean	Weight	Std.	Decision
1	Library Orientation	137	88	57	29	955	3.07	0.99	O
2	Library Tour	65	41	110	95	698	2.24	1.1	LO
3	Course Related instruction								
	(GSP 111)	95	116	28	72	856	2.75	1.12	O
4	Course integrated instruction	57	80	80	94	722	2.32	1.09	LO
5	Individualized instruction	30	57	135	89	650	2.09	0.92	LO
6	Literature search programme	51	44	127	89	679	2.18	1.03	LO
	Grand Mean	72.5	71	89.5	78	760	2.44	1.10	LO

Key: VO = Very Often, O= Often, LO = Less Often, NO = Not Often

The data in Table 3 shows that only library orientation and course-related instruction (GSP 111) are often provided to users of the two libraries under study. The two programmes have a mean score of 3.07 and 2.85 respectively which are above the benchmark of 2.50. The remaining four programmes have mean scores that range between 2.09 – 2.32 which are below the criterion mean (2.50). The grand mean of the data shows a low mean score of 2.44

and SD= 1.10 indicating that user education programmes are not often provided in the study area. The Table also shows high Standard Deviation values ranging from .92 - 1.12 meaning that the respondents were homogeneous in their responses.

Research Question Four: What are the challenges to effective user education programmes in the libraries under study?

Table 4: Respondents mean responses on the challenges to effective user education programmes in the libraries understudy

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Response Weight	Mean	Std.	Decision
1	Inadequate number of librarians	7	3	50	251	388	1.25	0.58	Disagree
2	Insufficient time allotted for the programme	20	18	167	106	574	1.85	0.8	Disagree
3	Inadequate facilities/resources	114	144	5	48	946	3.04	1	Agree
4	Lack of ICT skill for application and use of innovative technologies	130	46	90	45	883	2.84	1.12	Agree
5	Increased number of users	140	118	33	20	1000	3.22	0.88	Agree
6	Lack of fund	130	115	46	20	977	3.14	0.9	Agree
7	Users' ignorance of the programme	102	146	51	12	960	3.09	0.8	Agree
8	Users' indifference in pre-information literacy skill	3	2	30	276	354	1.14	0.44	Disagree
9	User education has been more of theory instead of practical	147	120	20	24	1012	3.25	0.89	Agree
10	Irregular power supply	126	147	29	9	1012	3.25	0.74	Agree
	Grand mean	91.9	85.9	52.1	81.1	810.6	2.61	1.16	Agree

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

As indicated in Table 4, the respondents identified a number of variables that limit user education programmes' efficacy in the study area. Except for the low mean scores of 1.25, 1.85, and 1.14 assigned to items numbers 1, 2, and 8 respectively, all of the mean scores for the other items are higher than the critical mean values of 2.50. This means that inadequate facilities/resources, lack of ICT expertise for application and use of innovative technologies, increased number of users, a lack of funding, users' ignorance of the programme, user education been more of theory instead of practical, and irregular power supply pose challenges to the effectiveness of user education programmes in the concerned libraries. The grand mean score of 2.61 demonstrates the programmes' difficulty in the study area.

Discussion of Major Findings

Based on the data presented in Table 1, the study revealed that all the under-listed programmes are provided in the study area except for the literature search programme that has a mean score of 2.17

(SD=1.02) below the benchmark of 2.50. The finding of the study coincides with Abah, Chorun, and Mbatoron (2016) that library orientation and course-related instruction (GSP 111) are user education programmes that are formally provided to the students as every other one is provided on request

Data presented in Table 2 revealed the contribution of user education programmes to users' access and use of library resources. The programmes encourage independent use of library resources, easy access and retrieval of digital information resources, and update users skills and knowledge of library users to a high extent. The grand mean score of 2.93 is a clear indication that user education programmes significantly enhance users' access and use of library resources. The findings correspond with the findings of Audu, Olokpo, Ohemu, Nwafornso, and Ugela (2020) that user education imparts knowledge, skills, and attitudes that induce users to access library resources efficiently. The findings also concede with Anyim (2018) that user education enhanced the use of library resources to a high extent. Despite the potentials of user

education on library use, the study in Table 3 disclosed infrequent provision of the programmes in the study area. The finding concurs with Abubakar and Cholom (2017) who had earlier foreseen the diminishing rate of users' access and use of library resources and advised the university authorities in Africa and other developing countries to recognise the need to provide the necessary competence for their students in order to facilitate their use of library resources in university libraries, to ensure increased research output. David-West (2020) affirmed that the major issue confronting many academic libraries across the country is how to organise user education programmes more often and effectively to meet the diverse learning needs and expectations of students.

The study however, identified various limiting factors in Table 4. Among the challenging factors to effective user education programme in the study area are inadequate facilities/resources, lack of ICT skill, and irregular power supply. The findings correspond with the findings of Ejiroghene (2020) that inadequate technological equipment, poor network/Internet connectivity, and epileptic power supply are some of the challenges confronting user education programmes. The findings also agree with Gaudioso, Turel, and Galimberti (2017) that technostress resulting from the misuse of ICTs limits the effective use of innovative technologies to improve user education programme and other services in libraries.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study's findings with regard to its goals, it is concluded that user education programmes are offered in the study area with the aim of enhancing library use since access to and use of library resources depend greatly on library use skills, which are not inherited but acquired through the programmes. The study came to the additional conclusion that user education programmes are only seldom delivered as a result of several identified constraints, which lessens their efficacy in the study area. Since most library resources are now in digital format and require specialised skills for easy access and retrieval, the study contends that user education programmes are crucial in the library environment, especially in this IT-driven era. The study found that user education programmes were underutilised in

the study area. The finding implies that the bulk of the library's clients will be unfamiliar with the library's different sections and activities, making it difficult for them to get the resources they need to meet their information demands. This could have a long-term impact on the institution's products and research output. Therefore, there is a need for development, namely in the area of ICT adaptation and use in libraries, as poor ICT facilities were identified as one of the most limiting factors to the programme's efficacy. Hence, this study recommends

- Organising user education programmes at regular intervals to equipped users with the required skills to explore the library and its resources with less stress.
- Training and retraining of librarians for skill acquisition and application of innovative teaching methods in providing user education programmes.
- Provision of ICT facilities to enable the librarians to teach and practise the necessary skills that can assist the users to make independent use of the library and its resources.
- Conducive atmosphere in terms of space, light, time, and recruitment of competent librarians to encourage the effectiveness of the programmes.

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