

## UNDERGRADUATE LIBRARY USERS' UTILIZATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN FEDERAL TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN IMO STATE

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### ABSTRACT

*The study focused on undergraduate library users' utilization of information resources in federal tertiary institutions in Imo State. Four research questions guided the study. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study is 11, 821 registered library users of the libraries studied. The sample for the study was 387. Proportionate sampling technique and simple random sampling technique were used for the study. Questionnaire designed using four-point rating scale was used to elicit data for this study. Data collected were analyzed using mean. The findings of the study revealed that books, encyclopedia, theses and dissertations, conference proceedings, journals, electronic databases, internet resources, newspapers/magazines, dictionaries, audio-visual materials and abstracts/indexes are the types of information resources available in the libraries studied; undergraduate library users use information resources to a low extent in the libraries studied; access to current and up-to-date information, studying for examination, access to wider range of information, among others are the reasons for undergraduate library users' utilization of information resources in the libraries studied; and insufficient search skills, users' lack awareness of new arrivals, among others are factors affecting utilization of information resources by undergraduate users in the libraries studied. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommend, among others that government and management of tertiary institutions should allocate adequate funds for academic libraries to maintain continuous subscriptions to online databases and also enhance the availability of other information resources to ensure that undergraduate library users can utilize these resources effectively.*

**Keywords:** Academic Libraries, Information Resources, Utilization, Undergraduates, Library Users

## **Introduction**

Academic libraries are attached to institutions of higher learning to support teaching, learning and research needs of students, lecturers and other members of the institution. Uwandu (2020) opines that academic libraries are libraries established in institutions of higher learning such as universities, colleges of education, polytechnics and colleges of technology that focus on providing information resources for research, learning and teaching purposes. Academic libraries are at the forefront of providing information resources and services to their respective communities in pursuit of the mission of their parent institutions. Hotsonyame (2023) asserts that the primary responsibility of every academic library is to satisfy the information needs of its parent institution, thus the faculty, staff, students and its immediate environment. They are of uttermost importance in any learning institution and community due to the fact that they are structures which houses information materials with the aid of services provided by librarians who have undergone training in library schools. Academic libraries serve as the central hub of higher institutions where all academic activities revolve. They are often considered as the most important resource centre of an academic institution. Academic libraries equip students in higher institutions with the resources needed to excel in their subject matter, techniques, skills, thought processes, and work methods within their chosen disciplines. Thus, for an academic library to operate effectively, it is essential to provide users with high-quality and up-to-date information resources.

Information resources are materials that the library collects to meet its users' needs and expectations. To Aladeniyi and Owokole (2018), library information resources are materials or information resources acquired by the library to meet the information needs of library users. In order to achieve the objectives of the library, adequate information resources in quality, depth, diversity and currency to support the institution curriculum are provided in the library. Thus, the academic library provides information resources that meet the information needs of library users which in this case include students at undergraduate and post graduate levels, teaching and non-teaching staff and other members of the library community. Access to various information resources in both print (books, journals, newspapers, reference materials, theses and dissertations, conference proceedings, among others) and non-print (e-books, e-journals, e-newspapers, e-magazines, e-theses and dissertations, e-conference proceedings, online databases, among others) format are relevant to support teaching, learning and research activities. Information resources are the vehicle of communication and transmission of education, learning and culture of the society for the past, present and future (Ekpenyang as cited in Idakwo, 2022). Therefore, utilization of these information resources by students is paramount to their academic development.

Utilization of information resources by undergraduate library users plays a significant role in their academic success and overall learning experience. Utilization of information resources refers to the extent library users exploit and benefit from information resources and services in different formats to satisfy their information needs (Tofi, Agada & Okafor, 2020). The effective

utilization of information resources, which include books, journals, research reports and electronic resources helps library users to have access to a vast range of contents across various disciplines and subjects. Okonoko, Ukanaga and Bassey (2024) concluded in their study that, for students to improve their academic performance and engage in social activities in today's digital environment, libraries must provide all the essential information resources and services. It is therefore, necessary for students to make maximum utilization of the available information resources to improve the quality of research and enhance academic performance.

It is generally expected that academic libraries should be fully utilized for quality teaching, learning and research. Information resources found in university libraries support teaching and learning functions by facilitating research and scholarship of both students and lecturers (Awotola & Olowolagba, 2018). Utilization of information resources by library users can enhance their understanding of specific concepts and broaden their knowledge. The ultimate goal of information resources is to provide accurate and specific information in the shortest possible time (Makinde, Aba & Ugah, 2017). These resources provide accurate and timely information, especially for library users who depend greatly on the electronic resources for information to advance research and collaboration with other researchers around the world for intellectual growth. Utilization of information resources offer library users the chance to access relevant and current information from different subject areas.

It is worthy to note that effective utilization of information resources is key to the success of undergraduate studies in any institution and the library plays the central role in making information available and accessible. Despite the perceived availability of information resources in academic libraries and their benefits in education, Tukar (2019) maintains that their effective utilization is hindered by factors such as poor internet connectivity, lack of awareness, irrelevant materials, lack of knowledge of search techniques to retrieve information effectively, lack of skills to use electronic information resources, shortage of loan period and lack of studying spaces.

However, it is essential to examine the information resources available in academic libraries that library users can effectively use to enhance the quality of their research, thereby improving operational efficiency and effectiveness. It is therefore against this background that the researcher conceived the idea to investigate on undergraduate library users' utilization of information resources in federal tertiary institutions in Imo State. The study focused on academic libraries of Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri; Federal College of Land Resources Technology, Owerri; Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri; and Federal University of Technology, Owerri.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is believed that the primary goal of academic libraries has consistently been to improve teaching, learning, and research. The effectiveness of any academic library is measured by the quality of information resources available to library users. However, a closer look at academic libraries shows that despite having abundant information resources, there seems to be a gap in

how undergraduate library users utilize these resources. In a study conducted by Ogbomo (2023), the finding revealed that the extent of students' utilization of information resources was low. The under-utilization raises the question of whether this trend is linked to how undergraduate library users perceive the library, or if other factors might be influencing their behaviour. Therefore, there is need to investigate and understand the reasons behind undergraduate library users' under-utilization of information resources as well as the potential barriers they face when accessing and utilizing these resources in academic libraries. Hence, this study on undergraduate library users' utilization of information resources in federal tertiary institutions in Imo State.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The general purpose of the study is to examine undergraduate library users' utilization of information resources in federal tertiary institutions in Imo State. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. identify the types of information resources available in the libraries studied;
2. ascertain the extent of utilization of information resources by undergraduate library users in the libraries studied;
3. find out the reasons for utilization of information resources by undergraduate library users in the libraries studied;
4. identify the factors affecting utilization of information resources by undergraduate library users in the libraries studied.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were posed for this study;

1. What are the types of information resources available in the libraries studied?
2. To what extent do undergraduate library users utilize information resources in the libraries studied?
3. What are the reasons for the utilization of information resources by undergraduate library users in the libraries studied?
4. What are the factors affecting utilization of information resources by undergraduate library users in the libraries studied?

### **Literature Review**

Information resources are vital tools in academic libraries. The success of any library depends on the quality of the information resources. The academic library is an invaluable partner in furthering the mission of the institution, and offering a full range of information resources is very paramount. Achigbue, Ajegbomogun, Okorie and Adeyoyin (2022) opined that the mission of the library is to provide adequate information resources in both print and non-print formats to support teaching, learning and research with an emphasis on meeting the information needs of its users. Therefore, academic library organizes information resources available in both print and non-print format for providing and obtaining needed information for its users. Awotola and Olowolagba (2018) maintained that for learning, teaching and research to be effective in the university, the library information resources must be relevant, current and in different formats-

print and non-print such as textbooks, journals, magazines, indexes and abstracts, encyclopedia, thesis and dissertations, microforms and electronic databases, publications of international organizations.

For a library to play its full role in an institution, its collection must not only include books but other materials such as general and specialized reference collections, made up of journals, newspapers, government publications, thesis, electronic resources among others (Ani, Ekeh, Ezemoyih, Okpara & Igu, 2022). In other words, every library should be stocked with both print and non-print media so that library users can benefit from them. Ogbomo (2023) maintained that print materials include textbooks, monographs, serials, periodicals, and government documents while non-printed or digital/electronic materials include e-books, the Internet, e-textbooks, databases, graphics, still and moving images, audio, software, and webpages available in the library. Akpe, Gabriel and Gbashinma (2018) indicated in their studies that information resources such as CD-ROMs, reference materials, books/monographs, periodicals, thesis/dissertations, research reports/bulletins, seminars/conference/workshops proceedings, and newsletters were available for use by students. Similarly, Aladeniyi and Owokole (2018) found that books, journals, directories, handbook, manuals, newspapers and magazines, reports, atlases/maps, dictionary, Internet resources, abstracts/indexes, encyclopedia and audio-visual materials are available in the libraries studied. Thus, an ideal academic library needs to make available both print and non-print to satisfy the information needs of library users and to actualize the objectives of the parent institution.

A lot of researches have been carried out in the area of extent of utilization of information resources in libraries. In a study conducted by Ani, Ekeh, Ezemoyih, Okpara and Igu (2022), the finding revealed that students utilize information resources to a high extent. Similarly, Ternenge (2019) discovered that information resources are utilized by students to a high extent. Also, Puertos (2022) found that the level of students' utilization of information resources was high. On the contrary, Ogbomo (2023) found that the types of information resources used by undergraduates are the internet, databases, computer software, e-books, and books and the extent to which they use these resources is low. More so, the study by Makinde, Aba and Ugah (2017) revealed that students' extent of utilization was generally low. In a study conducted by Ojo and Akande (2015), they drew a conclusion from their research that the level of usage of information resources among students was low. Thus, the level of utilization of information resources by the students are relatively fair and could affect their academic programmes.

The importance of information resources to library users cannot be over emphasized. Information resources offer library users the chance to access relevant and current information from different subject areas. Banjo and Ikonne (2021) in their study discovered that students use information resources in the library to upgrade personal knowledge in certain areas, for personal development and to supplement lecture notes. Awotola and Olowolagba (2018) revealed in their study that the undergraduates' reasons for using the information resources are for assignment, reading magazines and newspapers, reading for examination and for leisure and recreation

activities. Similarly, Obasuyi (2020) maintained that students use library resources to find general information, study for examinations, complete assignments and do research. Agyekummer and Filson (2018) found in their study that most of the students use library information resources to supplement their class notes, assignment and help them in examination preparation. More so, Aladeniyi and Owokole (2018) conducted a study and found that students use information resources to obtain general information, prepare for examinations, complete assignments, and conduct research. Hence, the efficient use of library information resources by students will undoubtedly enhance their knowledge and make them become more efficient in fulfilling their responsibilities as students.

A number of factors influence the use of information resources by library users in the library. Many researches have been conducted to look into these factors. Awotola and Olowolagba (2018) discovered in their study that the factors that hinder effective utilization of information resources by students in the library include inadequate reference sources, poor library staff/user relationship and lack of current and relevant materials, inadequate library funding, inadequate reading space, and erratic power supply. Idakwo (2022) discovered that lack of adequate current or relevant materials, non-involvement of lecturers in book selection, lack of adequate professional library staff, lecturers' lack of awareness of new arrivals were the major challenges impeding the use of library and information resources in Nigerian universities. In addition, Olorunfemi and Ipadeola (2021) revealed that the challenges being faced by undergraduate students in using library information resources are lack of awareness of the library resources, power outages, low speed of Internet services, few guide to direct users to appropriate sections of the library, users not informed of new arrival and inadequate provision of photocopying services within the library. Mamo and Amidu (2016) found that lack of current information resources and improper shelving of information resources are the major factors hindering the effective use of library resources in the library studied. Ebijuwu (2018) discovered that the major constraints to effective utilization of information resources were lack of knowledge of search techniques to retrieve information effectively, insufficient user training, lack of awareness, delay in downloading, and constant power failure.

### **Research Methodology**

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study is 11,821 registered library users from the four federal tertiary institutions in Imo State from 2021 to 2024 session. The sample for the study was 387. This was derived using Yaro Yamane Statistical Formula. Multi stage sampling technique was adopted. To get the sample from each of the institutions, proportionate sampling technique was adopted. This technique was used because the population of the registered library users from the institutions studied are not equal. Simple random sampling technique was further adopted to select individual respondents whereby every library user has equal opportunity of being selected. The instrument used to collect data for this study was questionnaire designed using four-point rating scale titled "Utilization of Information Resources in Academic Libraries Questionnaire (UIRALQ)". A total of 387copies of

questionnaire were distributed, 348 copies were filled and returned showing 88.8% return rate. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages for research question 1 while mean with 2.5 mean score as the criterion mean was used for research questions 2-4. Thus, the benchmark for mean rating is; 3.50-4.00 = Strongly Agree (SA)/Very High Extent (VHE), 2.50 - 3.49 = Agree (A)/High Extent (HE), 1.50 - 2.49 = Disagree (D)/Low Extent (LE) and 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree (SD)/Very Low Extent (VLE).

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Types of Information Resources Available in the Libraries Studied (n=348)**

Items Statements	Available		Not Available	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Books	315	91	33	9
Journals	271	78	77	22
Newspapers/Magazines	254	73	94	27
Conference Proceedings	276	79	72	21
Theses and Dissertations	292	84	56	16
Abstracts/Indexes	219	63	129	37
Encyclopedias	315	91	33	9
Dictionaries	234	67	114	33
Electronic Databases	257	74	91	26
. Audio-Visual Material	226	65	122	35
. Internet Resources	250	72	98	28

Table 1 shows the responses of respondents on the types of information resources available in the libraries studied. From the Table, 315 (91%) respondents indicated that Books and Encyclopedia are available, 292 (84%) respondents indicated that Theses and Dissertations are available, 276 (79%) respondents indicated that Conference Proceedings are available, 271 (78%) respondents indicated that Journals are available, 257 (74%) respondents indicated that Electronic Databases are available, 254 (73%) respondents indicated that Newspapers/Magazines are available, 250 (72%) respondents indicated that Internet Resources are available, 234 (67%) respondents indicated that Dictionaries are available, 226 (65%) respondents indicated that Audio-Visual Materials are available and 219 (63%) respondents indicated that Abstracts/Indexes are available in the libraries studied. The result of the analysis in the Table shows that the respondents agree that information resources are available in the libraries studied.

This finding revealed that books, encyclopedia, theses and dissertations, conference proceedings, journals, electronic databases, newspapers/magazines, internet resources, dictionaries, audio-visual materials and abstracts/indexes are the types of information resources available in the libraries studied. The finding is in consonance with the finding of Akpe, Gabriel and Gbashinma (2018) which revealed that information resources such as CD-ROMs, reference materials, books/monographs, periodicals, thesis/dissertations, research reports/bulletins,

seminars/conference/workshops proceedings, and newsletters were available for use by students. Similarly, the finding of this study corroborates the findings of Aladeniyi and Owokole (2018) that books, journals, directories, handbook, manuals, newspapers and magazines, reports, atlases/maps, dictionary, Internet resources, abstracts/indexes, encyclopedia and audio-visual materials are available in the libraries studied.

**Table 2: Mean Responses on the Extent Undergraduate Library Users Utilize Information Resources (n=348)**

S/N	Item Statements	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	Remarks
1.	Books	82	94	114	58	2.57	HE
2.	Journals	70	112	116	50	2.58	HE
3.	Newspapers/Magazines	42	54	171	81	2.16	LE
4.	Conference Proceedings	30	98	193	27	2.38	LE
5.	Theses and Dissertations	44	83	165	56	2.33	LE
6.	Abstracts/Indexes	53	71	188	36	2.41	LE
7.	Encyclopedia	20	46	178	104	2.46	LE
8.	Dictionaries	32	67	201	48	2.24	LE
9.	Electronic Databases	28	54	193	73	2.11	LE
10.	Audio-Visual Materials	33	49	199	67	2.14	LE
11.	Internet Resources	37	41	181	89	2.07	LE
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>2.31</b>	<b>LE</b>

Presented in Table 2 are the item- by- item mean rating of the extent undergraduate library users utilize information resources in the libraries studied. From the Table, the result shows that Books (2.57) and Journals (2.58) are used to a high extent while Encyclopedia (2.46), Abstracts/Indexes (2.41), Conference Proceedings (2.38), Theses and Dissertations (2.33), Dictionaries (2.24), Electronic Databases (2.24), Newspapers/Magazines (2.16), Audio-Visual Materials (2.14) and Internet Resources (2.07) are used to a low extent. Generally, undergraduate library users use information resources to a low extent in the libraries studied as shown in the grand mean which is 2.31.

It was also revealed that undergraduate library users use information resources to a low extent in the libraries studied. Corroborating this finding, Ogbomo (2023) found that the types of information resources used by undergraduates are the internet, databases, computer software, e-books, and books and the extent to which they use these resources is low. Similarly, the finding is in line with the finding of Ojo and Akande (2015) that the level of usage of information resources among students was low. The finding however is contrary to the finding of Ternenge

(2019) that information resources are utilized by students to a high extent. Also, Puertos (2022) found that the level of students' utilization of information resources was high.

**Table 3: Mean Responses on the Reasons for Undergraduate Library Users' Utilization of Information Resources (n=348)**

S/N	Item Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1.	Access to wider range of information	152	124	33	39	3.12	A
2.	Faster Access to authoritative and reliable information	108	118	52	70	2.76	A
3.	Access to current and up-to-date information	142	173	12	21	3.25	A
4.	To conduct research	73	181	43	51	2.79	A
5.	To complete class notes and assignments	103	154	35	56	2.87	A
6.	Studying for examination	134	158	32	24	3.16	A
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>2.99</b>	<b>A</b>

Table 3 presented the item-by-item mean rating of the reasons for undergraduate library users' utilization of information resources in the libraries studied. From the Table, the result shows that all the respondents agree to all the items as the reasons for undergraduate library users' utilization of information resources with grand mean of 2.99. Access to current and up-to-date information ranked first with 3.25 mean score, followed by Studying for examination with mean score of (3.16), Access to wider range of information (3.12), To complete class notes and assignments (2.87), To conduct research (2.79) and Faster access to authoritative and reliable information (2.76).

The finding revealed that access to current and up-to-date information, studying for examination, access to wider range of information, to complete class notes and assignments, to conduct research and faster access to authoritative and reliable information are the reasons for undergraduate library users' utilization of information resources in the libraries studied. This finding is in agreement with the view of Obasuyi (2020) that students use library resources to find general information, study for examinations, complete assignments and do research. This finding is also in agreement with the finding of Aladeniyi and Owokole (2018) that students use information resources to obtain general information, prepare for examinations, complete assignments, and conduct research. Also, the finding is in line with the finding of Banjo and Ikonne (2021) that students use information resources in the library to upgrade personal knowledge in certain areas, for personal development and to supplement lecture notes.

**Table 4: Mean Responses on the Factors Affecting Utilization of Information Resources by Undergraduate Library Users (n=348)**

S/N	Item Statements	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remarks
1.	Inadequate funds	84	187	35	42	2.90	A
2.	Poor internet connectivity	107	129	64	48	2.85	A
3.	Inadequate reading space	83	192	51	22	2.97	A
4.	Users' lack of awareness of new arrivals	122	167	33	26	3.11	A
5.	Inadequate power supply	113	144	56	35	2.96	A
6.	Inadequate current and relevant information resources	125	154	24	45	3.03	A
7.	Insufficient search skills	134	166	27	21	3.19	A
8.	Inadequate ICT infrastructure	105	147	50	46	2.89	A
9.	Lack of staff/user orientation and training	117	138	41	52	2.92	A
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>2.98</b>	<b>A</b>

Presented in Table 4 are the item- by- item mean rating of the factors affecting the utilization of information resources by undergraduate library users in the libraries studied. The result of the analysis in the Table shows that the respondents agree that insufficient search skills (3.19), users' lack awareness of new arrivals (3.11), inadequate current and relevant information resources (3.03), inadequate reading space (2.97), inadequate power supply (2.96), lack of staff/user orientation and training (2.92), inadequate funds (2.90), inadequate ICT infrastructure (2.89) and poor internet connectivity (2.85) are the factors affecting the utilization of information resources by undergraduate library users in the libraries studied. The grand mean of 2.98 indicates that there are factors affecting the utilization of information resources by undergraduate library users in the libraries studied.

The finding revealed insufficient search skills, users' unawareness of new arrivals, inadequate current and relevant information resources, inadequate reading space, inadequate power supply, lack of staff/user orientation and training, inadequate funds, inadequate ICT infrastructure and poor internet connectivity are factors affecting utilization of information resources by undergraduate users in the libraries studied. The finding is in agreement with the finding of Idakwo (2022) that inadequate current or relevant materials, non-involvement of lecturers in book selection, inadequate professional library staff, and lecturers' lack of awareness of new arrivals were the major challenges impeding the use of library and information resources in Nigerian universities. In addition, Olorunfemi and Ipadeola (2021) revealed that the challenges being faced by undergraduate students in using library information resources are lack of

awareness of the library resources, power outages, low speed of Internet services, few guide to direct users to appropriate sections of the library, users not informed of new arrival and inadequate provision of photocopying services within the library. Also, the finding of this study corroborates that of Awotola and Olowolagba (2018) that the factors that hinder effective utilization of information resources by students in the library include inadequate reference sources, poor library staff/user relationship and lack of current and relevant materials, inadequate library funding, inadequate reading space, and erratic power supply.

### **Conclusion**

The worth of every academic library is reflected in how the undergraduate users engage with its information resources. Consequently, it is essential for these users to fully utilize the available resources to meet their information needs and boost the image of the library. However, based on the findings of the study, it was revealed that undergraduate library users use information resources to a low extent in the libraries studied. This implies that undergraduate users do not make effective use of the information resources in the library studied. Despite the perceived availability of information resources in the academic libraries studied, some factors hinder effective utilization of information resources by undergraduate library users. Thus, insufficient search skills, users' lack awareness of new arrivals, inadequate current and relevant information resources, inadequate reading space, inadequate power supply, lack of staff/user orientation and training, inadequate funds, inadequate ICT infrastructure and poor internet connectivity are factors affecting utilization of information resources by undergraduate users in the libraries studied.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government and management of tertiary institutions should allocate adequate funds for academic libraries to maintain continuous subscriptions to online databases and also enhance the availability of other information resources to ensure that undergraduate library users can utilize these resources effectively.
2. Academic libraries and librarians should initiate awareness and information literacy programmes to enhance the use of information resources in academic libraries.
3. Academic library management should ensure information resources are up-to-date in the library so as to encourage undergraduate users to use the information resources for research and for updating their knowledge.
4. Government and management of tertiary institutions should ensure that alternative sources of electricity like inverters, solar power and generators are provided to tackle the problem of inconsistent power supply in academic libraries. Additionally, academic library management should initiate programmes to train undergraduate users in essential 21st-century Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills. This will help address the issue of inadequate ICT skills among undergraduate users.

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