UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' USE OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN IMO STATE: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF IMO STATE UNIVERSITY, OWERRI (IMSU) AND FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, OWERRI (FUTO)

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Abstract

Undergraduate students' use of university libraries of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO) and the Imo State University Owerri (IMSU) was conducted with the purpose of finding the extent of students' use of the libraries. The survey research design was used for the study and questionnaires were used for data collection. The study was guided by six research objectives. Systematic sampling technique was used to select 671 respondents for the study. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze data collected. Major findings of the study revealed that there were reasonable patronages of the two libraries by their respective users. Materials mostly used by the students are textbooks and they visited the libraries mainly to read for examination. The study recommended among others that use of library as a course of study be taught to the students for more than a semester, provision of library materials and facilities should be increased and the libraries should be made more conducive for effective use.

Introduction

The importance of libraries in academic communities cannot be overemphasized. According to Bankole (1990), university libraries are the centers of communication ensuring practical means of acquiring knowledge leading to understanding of minds of individuals and groups. University libraries are set up to assist the universities to achieve their objectives.

Library use, as an activity according to Burns (1978), is the most valid measure of any items' worth to a library or information system. Alkin (1971), as cited by Arua and Chikezie (2006), library use is defined as perusing the stock (browsing), asking for assistance from library staff, actually finding information of value, taking out a book in the library, studying one's own material in the library, coming into the library and so on.

It is common knowledge that in university libraries, students are the major users. Amongst the students, the various levels of the study affect pattern and frequency of use of the resources and facilities of the libraries. As pointed out by Anafulu (1996), no matter how brilliant a student can claim to be, the library cannot be ignored if high academic performance is to be assured. For students to become users, it is expected that they register with the university library. For them to be effective and good users, they will need to take the course on use of library as well as participate in the library orientation for freshmen.

Therefore, the result of the study of the use of academic libraries provides librarians with feedback to improve the total effectiveness of their academic libraries in response to the needs and wants of their users (Amkpa, 2000). The study of undergraduate students' use of FUTO and IMSU libraries is vital for effective planning and management of these university libraries.

Brief history of University Libraries in Imo State
Federal University of Technology Owerri was established by the Federal Government in 1980. The university took off at a temporary location at Lake Nwebere Campus. The library which was opened to readers on November 9, 1981, was later moved to the permanent site at Ihiagwa.

The library has about 63,645 volumes of books, 8,202 journal volumes. About 6,080 students are registered with the library. Out of this number, 3,719 are undergraduates.
The library has staff strength of 106 in the following categories:
  i.   Professionals   28
  ii.   Para-professionals   22
  iii. Library assistants/attendants   39
  iv.   Non-professionals   17

The library renders various services such as:
  i.   Lending
  ii.   Reference

iii. Virtual library
iv. Serials
v. Reprographic

Imo State University Owerri was established in 1981 through Law No, 4 passed by the Imo State House of Assembly, Owerri. This was amended by edict 27 of 1985, another in 1988 and finally for the relocation of the university from Uturu to Owerri by the Law no. 2 in 1992. With the creation of Abia State out of the old Imo State in 1991, the entire physical facilities and human resources of Imo State University were ceded to Abia as the land housing the university in Uturu is located in new Abia State.

The Imo State University library was established alongside its university. The library consists of the main library and faculty libraries. The libraries have about 140,000 volumes of books and about 2,107 journal issues. The library has staff strength of 17 professionals, 14 Para professionals and 14 library assistants/attendants.

The services of the library include:
i. Reference
ii. Lending
iii. Serials
iv. Virtual library
v. Reprographic

According to the 2009/2010 library statistics, the library has about 3000 registered undergraduate students.

Objectives of the study
The general objective of this study is to determine the extent of undergraduate students' use of Imo State University and Federal University technology Owerri libraries. Specifically, the study seeks to:
i. Determine the rate of undergraduate students' use of the libraries.
ii. Find out the services of the libraries mostly used by the undergraduates.
iii. To identify factors that influence choice of the library services that the undergraduates use.
iv. Find out reasons why undergraduate students use the libraries.
v. Determine the types of library materials undergraduate students most frequently consult.

vi.   Find out the problems associated with the undergraduate students' use of the libraries and proffer solutions to identified problems.

Review of related literature

The library serves as the bridge between the knowledge and instructions received by students in the classroom and the possible learning outcome by a particular student (Oyesiku, 2000). It is the nerve centre of all academic activities in the university. According to Bankole (1990), university libraries are the centre of communication ensuring practical means of acquiring knowledge leading to understanding of minds of individuals and groups. The university library exists to provide reading materials and other graphic sources to actualize the objectives of the parent institution.

On library use, Alkin (1971), as cited by Arua and Chikezie (2006), define it as perusing the stock (browsing), asking for assistance from library staff, actually finding information of value, taking out a book in the library and so on. It is important to note that library use is not only the above mentioned activities; it also includes combination of any of several other activities. Essentially, library use involves visiting, having library card and using the resources and facilities of the library.

Today, user study has become an important aspect of librarianship research. The vital purpose of carrying out user study is similar to market research in business. It is an attempt to discover patterns of use and levels of awareness of information resources and service available in the library (Buttler, 1982). Nwalo (2001), notes that user study helps to determine how well the library meets the needs of its users in relation to library goals and objectives. Uwem (2003), observes that user studies were major movement of the 1970 and 1980's. She maintains that the users' information needs should be analyzed and articulated so that needs-based resources would be acquired, processed and provided.

According to Amkpa (2000), a study of the use of academic libraries is a component of the planning process that provides libraries with feedback to improve the total effectiveness of their academic libraries in response to the needs and wants of their target users. In this regard, for effective performance of university libraries as instruments of educational development, students use pattern should be one of the determining factors to measure the extent of effectiveness of university libraries in fulfilling their set objectives within the context of the university system.

Student's satisfaction with the services of a university library will fully be made possible by their high level dedication and commitment to the use of library for their academic pursuit. The efforts of university libraries can also be marred if students do not avail themselves of this all important opportunity by registering with the library to use its services. Unfortunately, majority of students do not register with the library and those who registered do not use the library effectively in pursuing their studies. And what most of the students who visit the library do is to use their personal materials.

From the reasons advanced by the researchers above, it could be adduced that for the library to render its services effectively, user study should be carried out by the library from time to time to determine how well the service satisfies the needs of its users. Such study should be conducted by gathering opinion through questionnaires or interviews (Iruoje, 1995).

Research method

The survey design was used for the study. The design according to Aina (2004), had always been the commonest way for gathering information by seeking the opinion of individuals the consensus of which is expected to provide a solution to the problem.

The population of the study is 6,719. This was arrived at based on the 3,719 undergraduate students registered in FUTO in the 2009/2010 academic session and 3000 undergraduate students registered in IMSU in the 2009/2010 academic session.

The sample size is 671 based on the recommendation of Nwana (1981) that for a population of a few thousand a simple size of 10% should be used. To ensure fairness 10% for each of the universities is 371 for FUTO and 300 for IMSU.

Data collected through the questionnaire were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. A total of 671 (six hundred and seventy one) copies of the questionnaire were distributed and returned which gives a return rate of 100%. Five hundred and eighty (580) copies were found useable for analysis. This represents 86.44% of the questionnaire distributed to the two libraries.

Table 1: Distribution and return of the questionnaire

Institution	No. Administered	No. Returned	%
IMSU	300	300	44.71
FUTO	371	371	55.29
Total	671	671	100

Out of the 580 copies of questionnaire found useable for data analysis, IMSU library has 219 copies and FUTO library 361 copies.

Table 2: Useable questionnaire for data analysis

Institution	No. of useable questionnaire	%
IMSU	219	37.76
FUTO	361	62.24
Total	580	100

Data analysis and discussion of findings

Results on the frequency of students' visit to the libraries as shown on Table 3 indicate that 109 (representing 49.78%) respondents from IMSU and 191 (representing 52.91%) respondents from FUTO visited the libraries two times a week. 9Q (representing 41.09%) respondents from IMSU and 125 (representing 34.63%) respondents from FUTO visited the libraries three times a week.

As shown on Table 3, majority of the respondents visit the libraries two times a week. Although reasonable, but considering huge sum of money expended on the provision of library materials and facilities, it would have been more reasonable if higher usage is recorded. In view of the above, there is need for the librarians to create awareness on the part of the students, on the need to effectively use the libraries so as to ensure success in their academic pursuit. According to Anafulu (1996), no matter how brilliant a student can claim to be, the library cannot be ignored if high academic performance is to be assured.

Table 3: Undergraduate Students' visit to the libraries

Item Description	IMSU Library		FUTO Library	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Two times a week	109	49.78	191	52.91
Three times a week	90	41.09	125	34.63
Once a week	20	9.13	45	12.46
Total	**219**	**100**	**361**	**100**

On the sections of the libraries students mostly use, Table 4 shows that there were about five major sections in each of the libraries students used most frequently. As shown in table 4 the most prominent section they visited was circulation section with 96 (representing 43.84%) respondents from IMSU and 171 (representing 47.37%) respondents from FUTO. The serials section appears to be the next section been used by the respondents heavily; with 72 (representing 32.88%) respondents from IMSU and 112 (representing 31.02%) respondents from FUTO).

From the results, it is very clear that undergraduate students in these universities used the circulation section more frequently than others. This could be as a result of the fact that most transactions in academic libraries take place in this section of the library.

Serials section being the next to be patronized by students shows that serials section houses the journals. Most final year students consult journal materials for their project research work.

The results of the finding showed that ICT section is the least patronized. The implication of the above is that the libraries should step up full digitalization and training of staff so as to render efficient services that will translate to high patronage by students. This result is in line with the recommendation of Oyesiku and Akinbode (2004), that Babcock University Library should not rest on it oars in fully going into automation so that the users will have access to Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), CD-ROM database and internet research information.

Table 4: The Section of the Libraries mostly used by Undergraduate Students

Item Description	IMSU Library		FUTO Library	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Circulation	96	43.84	171	47.37
Document	23	10.50	15	4.16
Serials	72	32.88	112	31.02
ICT	18	8.21	23	6.37
Reference	10	4.57	40	11.08
Total	219	100	361	100

Evidence from Table 5, showed that a well shelved library materials help a user to have quick and easy access to library resources of choice. This assertion was upheld by majority of the respondents in the universities under study. 74 (representing 33.79%) respondents from IMSU and 176 (representing 48.75%) respondents from FUTO. The implication of this finding is that with well arranged materials on the shelf; a user moves from the catalogue cabinet or the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) straight to the shelf. With the call number of the library material, the user locates it on the shelf without the assistance of the library staff. This prevents frustration and saves the time of the user.

The next item in the ranking is the shelf guide. From the findings, 62 (representing 28.31%) respondents from IMSU and 164 (representing 45.43%) respondents from FUTO agreed that library shelf guides help in their use of the libraries. This means that any library with well labeled shelf guides calls for do it yourself. A patron does not need the help of any library staff to locate whatever material the user needs.

Table 5: Factors that Influence Undergraduate Students use of the Library

Item Description	IMSU Library		FUTO Library	
	Frequency	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
Library shelf guide	62	28.31	164	45.43
Staff assistance	53	24.20	7	1.94
Displays	30	13.70	14	3.88
Well shelved library material	74	33.79	176	48.75
Total	219	100	361	100

As to the reasons why undergraduate students use the libraries, the results show that majority of the users with 81 (representing 36.99%) respondents from IMSU and 159 (representing 44.04%) respondents from FUTO agreed that the major reason they use the libraries was to read for examination. This goes further to confirm the observation of Oyesiku and Oduwole (2004), that over a quarter of the students of Olabisi Onabanjo University Libraries visit the libraries, mainly to read for examination instead of other reasons.

That student of university libraries under study visits the libraries mainly to read for examination it not impressive. This situation does not place the libraries as the institutions' centre for training, teaching and research. Students are expected to visit the library among other reasons, to do their class assignments. Lecturers should refer students to the library where they will find information materials that will assist them in doing their class assignments.

Libraries should create awareness on the part of students, on the need to make effective use of the library so as to ensure success in their academic pursuit. The above is in line with the suggestion made by Amkpa (2000), in a study of students' use of University of Maiduguri libraries.

Table 6: Reasons why Undergraduate Students use University Library.

Item Description	IMSU Library		FUTO Library	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
To do class assignment	37	16.89	63	17.45
To read for examination	81	36.99	159	44.04
To borrow library materials	21	9.59	45	12.47
To read personal textbooks	30	36.53	94	26.04
Total	219	100	361	100

On the type of materials undergraduate students consulted most in these libraries, results on Table 7 show that 86 (representing 39.27%) respondents from IMSU and 178 (representing 49.31%) respondents from FUTO indicated they used books. 72 (representing 32.88%) respondents from IMSU and 85 (representing 23.55%) respondents from FUTO used periodicals. 40 (representing 18.26%) respondents from IMSU and 59 (representing 16.34%) respondents from FUTO agreed they used students project reports.

The findings of this study show that books and periodicals are the major library materials students require most. Their interest in these library materials is understandable. They should be encouraged to make effective use of other library materials.

Unfortunately, use of government publications is not widespread among the respondents as it scored the least in the ranking. The failure of the students to use government publications while in university may deprive them of an early knowledge of government policies and activities, governance and public administration.

Table 7: The Types of Materials Undergraduate Students consult most

Item Description	IMSU Library		FUTO Library	
	Frequency	°/o	Frequency	%
Books	86	39.27	178	49.31
Periodicals	72	32.88	85	23.55
Government publication	21	9.59	39	10.80
Students project reports	40	18.26	59	16.34
Total	219	100	361	100

Students' satisfaction with the services of the libraries was also sought. According to the results, 74 (representing 23.79%) respondents from IMSU and 103 (representing 28.53%) respondents from FUTO were satisfied with the reference services of the libraries, those who were satisfied with reprographic services recorded 30 (representing 13.71%) respondents from IMSU and 69 (representing 19.11%) respondents from FUTO. Those who were satisfied with bibliographic service were 85 (representing 38.81%) respondents from IMSU and 127 (representing 35.18%) respondents from FUTO. This is the highest in the ranking and goes to say the level of bibliographic service these libraries render to users. 19 (representing 8.67%) respondents from IMSU and 41 (representing 11.36%) respondents from FUTO expressed their level of satisfaction with ICT/Internet service. While 11 (representing 5.02%) respondents from IMSU and 21 (representing 5.82%) respondents from FUTO indicated their level of satisfaction with the inter-library service of the libraries.

The findings of this study show that students of these universities are not satisfied with the ICT/Internet service of the libraries. The results call for an improvement on the ICT/Internet service of the libraries. This is necessary to enable students benefit from the advantages of internet in educational development.

On inter-library service, there is no gain saying the fact that no library has all that users want in terms of information materials. In view of the above fact, these libraries should liaise with other libraries around to get what their students need that will enhance their educational pursuit. This also supports the findings of Oyesiku and Oduwole 92004), that Olablsi Onabanjo University library management should embark on inter-library cooperation with other well established libraries within their location. If logistics would permit, such co-operation should be extended to other libraries throughout the country and abroad.

Table 8: Students Satisfaction with the Services of the Libraries

Item Description	IMSU Library		FUTO Library	
	Frequency	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
Reference services	74	33.79	103	28.53
Reprographic services	30	13.71	69	19.11
Bibliographic services	85	38.81	127	35.18
ICT/Internet services	19	8.67	41	11.36
Inter-library services	11	5.02	21	5.82
Total	219	100	361	100

The result as indicated on Table 9 shows that 82 (representing 37.44%) respondents from IMSU and 118 (representing 32.68%) respondents from FUTO agreed that inadequate opening and closing hours were the problems that affected their use of the libraries. Inadequate current reading materials recorded 15 (representing 6.85%) respondents from IMSU and 34 (representing 9.42%) respondents from FUTO.

From Table 9, it is evident that respondents indicated that unconducive library environment was a major problem associated with their use of the libraries. 90 (representing 41.09%) respondents from IMSU and 125 (representing 34.63) respondents from FUTO attested to that. This finding collaborates Okoro, Solomon-Uwake and Njoku (2011). The researchers called on the management of the Imo State University Owerri, to make the library more conducive for reading and research.

The unconducive state of the library could be seen in various ways. It may be that the libraries halls are not fully air-conditioned and lack regular power supply to ensure maximum functioning of the fans, air-conditioners and other electrical gadgets. It could also mean that the libraries are noisy and unclean. As a result of the above, the managements of these libraries should make a conscientious effort to ensure that the libraries are made comfortable for reading and research.

The results of the finding also show that the libraries under study are not doing badly in the provision of current library materials and proper shelving of library materials, but still need to improve. They recorded the lowest scores; however, stocking of out dated materials is dangerous. This is because students who read such materials will be far from the current developments in their fields of endeavours. In the light of the above, librarians should make judicious use of the 10% allocated to the library to provide current reading

materials in various fields undertaken by their parent institutions. They can also liaise with some book aids foundations and other donor agencies for donations.

Proper shelving of library materials saves the time and energy of would be user. It saves the user from frustration arising from the inability of the user locating library materials in need of.

Table 9: Problems associated with Undergraduate Students' Use of the libraries.

Item Description	IMSU Library		FUTO Library	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Inadequate opening and closing hours	82	37.44	118	32.68
Inadequate current reading materials	15	6.85	34	9.42
Unconducive library environment	90	41.09	125	34.63
Improper shelving of library materials	15	6.85	46	12.74
Uncooperative staff	17	7.76	38	10.53
Total	219	100	361	100

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations have been proffered:

1. Librarians should solicit for faculty members' cooperation in increasing students' library use by referring them to the library for their assignments.
2. The library instruction course taught to the newly admitted students in some Nigerian university libraries should be re-designed with emphasis placed more on use of library which should be taught for not less than two semesters.
3. The libraries should not rest on their oars in fully going into automation so that students will have full access to On-line Public Access catalogue (OPAC) and internet services.

4. The libraries should step up their services and facilities. Library services provided should be periodically and widely publicized through library displays and exhibitions.
5. More current and relevant books, journals and audio-visual materials in different subject areas should be acquired.
6. Opening hours of the library should be extend especially during the examination periods.
7. Proper and regular shelving of library materials are important in order to reduce the rate of frustration suffered by students in search of materials on the shelf.
8. Librarians should educate undergraduate students on the need to make use of other materials in addition to textbooks such as serials, government publications and reference materials.
9. Libraries should be made more conducive and comfortable for academic work by ensuring that the library is clean, noiseless and there is regular supply of electricity.

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