

# USING LIBRARY CATALOGUE AS ACCESS POINT TO ACADEMIC LIBRARY COLLECTION IN NIGERIA.

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## ABSTRACT:

*The study investigated the use of the catalogue by clientele of Federal University of Technology. Owerri (FUTO) library. The study employed the questionnaire and oral interview methods to generate the data. The questionnaires were distributed to the library users during 2005/2006 session, while the researcher carried out the oral interviews within the same period. The analysis of the findings showed that majority of the users preferred going directly to the shelves to search for materials, than going through the catalogue. The study also revealed that respondents used the catalogues heavily when preparing for examinations and for doing assignments/homework. Again, most of the users considered going to the catalogue as time-wasting, as they felt it took them less time to find books directly from the shelves. Recommendations made to improve effective catalogue use include education in the use of catalogues, automation and internet services.*

## INTRODUCTION

It is the responsibility of the university/academic libraries to select, acquire and organize knowledge and high quality information materials to support teaching, learning and research.

Academic libraries are established to procure and supply text books, journals and other valuable materials in the library to promote academic excellence. To be able to retrieve information from stock holdings is one of the most important responsibilities of a library; and indeed, what distinguishes a library from mere collection of books.

The Federal University of Technology. Owerri (FUTO) library opens at 8.30a.m. each day including Saturdays. FUTO library performs such functions of the library as Collections Development and User/Readers Services. Immediately materials are acquired, they are processed and organized for the User Services Division and are given to users within the circulation areas.

The users have the advantage of asking for what they need from the circulation desk staff or going through the Public card catalogue. The library staff recognizes the fact that User Services Division provides adequate assistance, advice, guidance and other related services to the user. Elaturoti (1990) in Oluyemisi, (2005) asserted that services to users whether to academic staff or to other library users, are to promote the goodwill of the library and to utilize all possible access and resources to attract users to the library at all times.

The traditional method of retrieving materials from the shelves is through the catalogues; and the card catalogue is the most popular catalogue format used in many countries of the world, Odusanya (2001). With the current trends in Information and Communication Technology

(ICT). libraries tend to go for modern innovative computer use. like automation, internet etc. That is .more convenient, faster, more accurate and more current than the traditional methods of library practice. In the past two decades, traditional card catalogue has gradually shifted focus to automated catalogues, which has made librarianship profession more versatile especially to libraries in Europe and America.

In Nigeria, today, automated catalogues are gradually gaining ground as shown by achievements of libraries of IITA Ibadan, the University of Ibadan. and the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs (NIIA), as reported by Alabi (1987); Ehikhamenor (1990); Tamuno, (1992); Aderuran et al (1992); Ogunleye (1977) and Idowu and Mabawonku (1999). Also, National Universities Commission (NUC) encouraged and advised automation in university libraries and recommended the use of uniform library software for their cataloging and other house-keeping chores.

These recent developments in automated catalogue; notwithstanding, many Nigerian university libraries still rely on the traditional card catalogue.

However, FUTO library has not been left out in library automation. Alice for Windows software is in use in FUTO library. An Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) is used hand-in-hand with manual catalogue. The Virtual Library database is also in use.

This study therefore set out to:

- (i) To investigate the extent of use of card catalogues by students as access point to library materials.
- (ii) To find out problems and constraints militating against the use of catalogues and why students prefer to search for materials directly in the shelves,
- (iii) To find out the response of the students on how to make the use of catalogue easy for them.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The university library according to Aje, (1977) is the one that is attached to an institution of higher learning of the status of a university, polytechnic or college and its services are primarily to students, staff and others who need its services. Aje sees the library as a social institution that is more than building; in that it must have relevant books and allied materials for use by the institution's personnel, students and other clients,

American Library Association (ALA). (1990) states that academic library must be able to provide users with complete and accurate answers to information inquiries regardless of complexities. Also. Akinade (2000) observed that the expectations of users/people are very high when sourcing or searching for information and frustration is equally high when their expectations are not met. He therefore suggested that for the library to satisfy the needs of users, both human and material resources must be adequately made available.

Bunge (1999) emphasized high library staff morale, reasonable work load and user-friendly environment as factors that enhance quality reference service. There is need to put into use new trends to be relevant in the scheme of current global trends.

Odesaya and Ajferuke (2000) assert that information technology brings about improved productivity, customer satisfaction and significant improvement in the quality of service and information dissemination in academic libraries.

Ojo-Ade and Jagboro (2000) asserts that catalogue use surveys are fewer, especially the card catalogues in these days of on-line catalogues/automation. This supports the study by Groves and Davis (1980) which revealed little use of card catalogue in meeting clientele requests, though books were substantially used. This discrepancy between catalogue and book use was attributed in part to small size of the collection and the familiarity of library staff who assisted in the collection. They therefore tend to browse the shelves than search for materials through the catalogues.

Eaomo (1988), revealed a poor use of the catalogues on the survey conducted on catalogue in Larunde Odeku Medical Library. This he attributed to users not given the necessary user education programmes.

According to Goldhor (1999) browsing is a causal examination of books at random to find something to borrow and read with no purposive search for a specific title or particular class of books.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The survey method was used for this study. A pre-tested structured interview schedule was designed and used to elicit information from some would be respondents. Questions were modified based on suggestions by librarians in the study area. The researcher then developed a structured questionnaire. In order to achieve the objectives of the study, data requirements included information on the respondents, their registration and use of FUTO library. The target population in this study is the random sample of students who used the library for the period when the questionnaire was administered.

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire. Of the 200 students sampled, 180 completed and returned the questionnaire in useable form. The completed questionnaires were analyzed and interpreted using simple descriptive methods and tables. The researcher also conducted oral interviews to clarify certain aspects of the responses.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Table I shows the level of users' awareness of resources and materials in the library.

**Table I: User Awareness of Resources and Materials available in the library**

<b>Response</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	160	88.89
No	15	8.33
Undecided	5	2.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

160 respondents said they were aware of the resources and materials available in the library. These accounted for 88.89% of the population of the respondents. 15 respondents [8.33%] indicated that they were not aware of the resources and materials available in the library. 5 respondents (2.78%) were undecided. All considered, the results show that majority of users investigated were aware of the resources and materials in the library.

**Table II: Methods used by respondents to access materials in the library.**

Access method	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Use of catalogue	113	62.78
Browsing/Reading the shelves to find books and placing back in the shelves.	57	31.67
Pulling down the books from the shelves and leaving on reading tables after looking through	10	5.55
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

Table II shows the responses on the methods used by respondents to access or locate books/materials in the library. 57 respondents, that is. 41.67% of the respondents, preferred browsing/reading the shelves to find books directly from the shelves, than to using the catalogue. Considering all responses that had to do with using catalogues that is author/title catalogue, or subject catalogue or a combination of both; 113 respondents (i.e. 62.78%) considered using catalogues to locate materials in the library. From these responses, it is evident then that appreciable percent of users are aware of the different types of catalogues available and can use them adequately. A small number (5.55 percent) of the respondents simply pulled down the books, looked through and abandoned them on the reading tables. When interviewed on why they did not use the catalogues, they claimed they did not know, how to use the library, or that it was time-wasting or that they get frustrated when they access through the catalogues and do not get the materials on the shelves.

**Table 111: Reason for Using Catalogue\***

Reason	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
To access research materials	93	51.67
To access materials for making notes	99	55.00
To access materials for assignment' home work	73	40.56
To access materials for reading for pleasure		
	16	8.89
<b>Total</b>	<b>281</b>	

*A combination of answers were given for this question*

Table III, shows the result of the responses on their reason for using catalogues. 51.67% of the respondents claimed they used catalogues to access research materials. 55% used

catalogues to access materials for making notes, while another 40,56% used catalogues to access materials for doing their assignments. Only a tiny 8.89 percent used catalogues to access reading materials for reading for pleasure.

**Table IV: Frequency of Use of Library Catalogues**

<b>Frequency</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Regularly	33	29.20
Occasionally	74	65.49
No Opinion	6	5.31
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>

Table IV shows the responses of the interviewees on how frequently they use the library catalogues. 74 respondents, which is 65.49 percent of the respondents claimed using the catalogues occasionally; while 33 respondents (29.20%) claimed using the catalogues regularly. The remaining 6 respondents (5.51%) did not have any opinion.

**Table V: Experiences of Users on the Ease of Using the Catalogues.**

<b>Experiences</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
With ease	56	49.56
With difficulty	46	40.7
No opinion	11	9.73
<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>100</b>

Table V shows that 56 respondents (49.56%) encountered no difficulties in locating materials through the use of a catalogue, while 46 respondents (40.71%) did so with difficulty; and 11 respondents (9.73%) had no opinion.

**Table VI: Means of Making Use of Catalogues Easy for Users to Access Materials.**

<b>How to, make use of catalogues easy for users</b>	<b>No. of Respondents</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Education on use of catalogues	40	22.20
Computerization	no	61.10
Assistance from library staff	30	16.70
<b>Total</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>100</b>

The responses of the respondents on the ways and means of encouraging users to use catalogues for easy access to materials in the library are shown in Table VI. 40 respondents representing (22.20%) canvassed for education on the use of catalogues for accessing materials in the library. 110 respondents or 61.10% opted for computerization, while 30 respondents or 16.70% suggested assistance from library staff. It is apparent from Table VI that a large percentage of the respondents want the automation of library catalogues.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study showed that most of the students who use FUTO Library did not use library catalogues to locate materials in the library, as should be the case. They rather go straight to the shelves depending on chance to get what they want. The result is that the books pulled from the shelves are wrongly placed back on the shelves or are scattered on the reading tables after consultation.

Some of the respondents feel that going through the catalogues was time wasting. This is as a result of lack of knowledge on the use of catalogues. It is deducible from the present results that most of the students were non-challant concerning the library orientation that is usually conducted at the beginning of each new session to acquaint freshmen with the use of library. Lack of knowledge of library usage at the primary and secondary levels also accounted for frustration and lack of interest on the part of most of users investigated. Another source of frustration was users' inability to locate on the shelves, materials which were indicated in the catalogue as being available. Also, it is disturbing to note from the present study, that majority of the users (65.49%) use the catalogue only occasionally. On the other hand, most of the users who used the catalogue at all used them while preparing for examinations and when they needed to improve their academic output in literature search or review in respect to research or seminar papers. The respondents (61-10%) were in favour of automation of library catalogue for easy access of materials, and so, were unanimous in their request for improvement through computerization and automation of library catalogues. It is noteworthy, that the oral interview revealed that a good percent of those interviewed and who opted for catalogue automation had no working knowledge of the computer.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The fact that the catalogue is a very important tool for the effective utilization of library materials cannot be over emphasized. Consequently, and arising from the results of the present investigation, the following recommendations were relevant for the improved utilization of catalogue services of the FUTO library:

1. Practical-oriented user education programme on the use of catalogue for information retrieval should be available and mandatory for users.
2. Guideline on how to use catalogues should be prepared and displayed in strategic places where users can see them for direction.
3. The Users Services Unit should organize demonstration on how to use the catalogues at least once or twice a semester and wide publicity should be given to create awareness.
4. User-friendly staff should be assigned to take care of the library collection and attend to users' request at all times.
5. The library should provide electronic information facilities like computers. CD-ROM database, telephones and online-internet services.
6. All the existing library staff should be formally trained to be conversant with the new information and communication technology where necessary.
7. Regular stocktaking should be done so as to replace and locate books which might have been lost or misplaced, and to know what to add to existing stock.

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