

UTILIZATION OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARY FACILITY: A CASE STUDY OF CROSS RIVER UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, CALABAR

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the frequency of use of University Library resources by the academic staff of the Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, the purpose and the extent to which these staff encourage their students to use the library. A total of 600 copies of a questionnaire were administered on all academic staff from the four campuses of the University. Of these, 436 representing 72.6% of the copies administered were returned. Frequency counts and percentages were used to analyze the data collected. The findings reveal that academic staff were not adequately making use of the University library. It also shows that academic and library staff were not doing much to encourage their students to use the library. The major factor militating against the use of the library is found to be lack of current books and journals in the library. This is followed by lack of electronic library materials. Recommendations are made for the purchase of more current books and journals, the incorporation of electronic resources in the library collection and a more aggressive effort by the librarians to promote what the library has for its patrons. Moreover, academic staff were encouraged to give their students library-based assignments in order to encourage them to use the library.

INTRODUCTION

The mission of a library is to provide full range communication and information services necessary to carry out the goals and duties of the institution the library was established to serve. College/University libraries support and enhance programmes of instruction, learning, research and publication. It is important to note that the effectiveness of a library does not depend on only its collection/resources and other facilities per se but also on the success of its exploitation and use. Readers must understand what libraries hold for them, know how to access these materials and use them. The library owes its readers this duty of material provision and creation of retrieval means. While the librarian is concerned with the collection and organization of records, he also has the responsibility for ensuring that patrons or users are aware of the library's potentials and resources and exploit them without which the library serves no useful purpose.

Despite the important role which libraries play in academic institutions, it does appear that faculty members do not make adequate use of them. For instance, records from the circulation unit of Cross River University of Technology, Calabar campus show that only 28 out of about 219 academic staff are registered to use the University Library. This scenario is not significantly different from what is observed in the University of Calabar. Ologbonsanye (1994) observed that there is a general lack of knowledge for the public concerning functions, need, and potentials of libraries. He noted that a relatively small number of users actually

account for most of the total use of library stock and facilities while a large proportion of the remaining number constitute only occasional visitors or users of the library. Ahiauzu (1988) reported very low registration of teaching and research staff at the River State University, library. She also observed that the use made of the serials collection of the library was very insignificant compared to the huge resource and funds spent to procure materials for the unit.

Academic, staff are expected to not only use libraries for learning and instructions but also to encourage their students to maximally utilize the resources of their libraries for study. Colvin and Keene (2004) in a related work in the use of e-resources averred that effective collaboration between teaching and the library staff, the timely embedding of e-journals inductions into the learning process can significantly enhance the learning rate of students. Egan (1992) rightly pointed out that the narrow view of seeing education as learning right answers which students can give back in response to solid views of their teachers rather than exploring relative and alternative views from other sources must be discarded. King, Tenopir, Montgomery and Aerni (2003) in their work patterns of journal use by faculty at three diverse universities found that reading inspires new thinking, narrows, broadens or changes the focus of research/teaching and leads the readers to new authors or data sources. What is significant in this work is that they opined that the proportion to attain the above gains was higher for articles provided by the library.

Specifically, they claimed that 45% of all reading from library-provided sources inspired new thinking as against about 31% of materials from other sources. They attributed the increase in library reading to a reduction in personal subscriptions, a substantial increase in the size of electronic journal in the library collection, a large increase in on-line bibliographic searching which results in faculty identifying more relevant articles that are available in the library collection.

Adikata and Anwar (2006) examined the importance faculty members place on students' library use and their self-perceived role in motivating students to use the library. Respondents from this study considered students' library use, the provision of library-based assignment and librarians' role as important. The practical implications of their study was the recommendation that the librarian should be urged to respond proactively to the needs of students and faculty, to adopt more aggressive marketing strategy and to develop general and course-integrated information literacy programmes.

On their part, Manuel, Molloy and Beck (2003) observed that students' intensive and extensive use of the library is highly motivated by assignments given to them by their professors. Surprisingly, they equally observed that though these professors expected their students to use libraries, they themselves were not keen users of the library.

In determining the value of library instruction and seeking to collaborate with faculty, they noted that librarians may find that faculty does not necessarily attribute the same importance to learning how to do information search as librarians do. Faculty do not frame their support for library instruction in the long term goal of the development of information literacy skills, critical thinking skills or capabilities for lifelong learning but rather for the short term goal or

value of the development of skills to complete a particular assignment in their disciplines. This narrow view does not make for success in effective lifelong library use. More can be achieved when both the librarian and the / faculty share a common goal.

In most of the cases cited by them, faculty members were either not keen in teaching literacy information skills to students considered it not too important or preferred that, it should be handled by the General Studies/English Departments, Citing Minchow et al. (2003) while arguing for the need for collaborative partnership between librarians and faculty in developing students information literacy skills stated:

- i. That even course related LI is insignificant in promoting these skills and needs to be replaced with curriculum-integrated LI and
- ii. That we have reached a point at which neither librarians nor instructional faculty can adequately teach the research process in isolation from each other. "Librarians do not have subject expertise in the discipline, while the faculties are not attuned to changes in the information science area.

Since students' use of the library is significantly motivated by faculty-based priorities, it is important to establish a firm library /faculty collaboration and as well as explore other avenues to promote library use. Faculty must be encouraged to learn skills necessary for accessing library information resources, use these resources themselves and in turn serve as models to inculcate literature search culture to their students. The work attempts to investigate the extent to which faculty members use academic libraries to promote teaching and learning and in accessing services provided in the library.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study set out to:-

- Find out the extent of use of academic libraries by academic staff;
- To ascertain the purpose of such use;
- Ascertain the extent to which academic staff encourage students to use libraries, and
- Identify problems encountered in such use.

METHODOLOGY

The instrument used for this survey was a self reporting questionnaire. This was administered on 600 academic staff of Cross River University of Technology, Calabar, A majority of them were administered during Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) Congress meetings and some in the library. Others were posted to staffs pigeon holes in their faculty offices. A seventy-two points six percent (72.6%) rate was achieved as 434 out of six hundred-copies of the questionnaires were returned. Each completed and returned questionnaires was analyzed using descriptive statistics and tables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 1: Number of respondents by faculty

S/N	FACULTY	NO. OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
1.	Agric	61	14
2.	Engineering	39	9
3.	Education	149	34
4.	Mgt. Science	52	12
5.	Science	87	20
6.	Env. Studies	26	6
7.	Comm. Studies	9	2
8.	Gen. Studies	13	3
	Total	436	100

The Centre for General Studies is not truly a faculty but has its status. This explains the small number of respondents from there. Also the Faculty of Communication Technology has few respondents because it is new and has only two departments.

Table2: Frequency of library use by the academic staff of CRUTECH, Calabar

S/N	FACULTY	RESPONSES BY F.4CULTV				Total (%)
		Regularity	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	
1.	Agric		11	25	17	61
2.	Engineering	5	7	16	11	39
3.	Education	19	25	63	42	149
4.	Mgt. Science	7	9	22	14	52
5.	Science	11	15	36	25	87
6.	Env. Studies	3	5	11	7	26
7.	Comm. Tech.	1	2	4	2	9
8.	Gen. Studies	2	2	5	4	13
	Total	55(12.6%)	76(17.4%)	1 182(41.8)	123 (28.2)	436

Table two above shows the academic staff of 182 representing 41.8% of the respondents are occasional users of the library, 123 (28.2%) rarely use the library, 76 (17.4%) of them use the library often while only 55 (12.6%) are regular users of the University library.

Table 3: Purpose of use of the library by academic staff of Crutech, Calabar

Responses	N	%
Review literature for term papers, conferences / publications	125	28.7
Prepare lectures/teaching notes	207	47.7
To browse for current materials the library has acquired in many	67	15.3
General reading / leisure	37	8.6
Total	436	100

From tables 3 it can be observed that the major purpose of the use of the library by academic/teaching staff is to develop their teaching notes which account for 47.4% followed by review of literature to write term papers, conference papers and papers for publication. Of the 436 respondents, only 37 (8.6) go to the library to do general/leisure reading. This suggests poor reading culture by the staff.

Table 4: Extent to which academic staff encourage students to use the library

Responses	Regular	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
Give them specific assignment that require library exploitation	30	17	22	31
Prepare reading list that provide opportunity for students in the use of the library to revise courses taught.	5	11	28	56
Mount library display of materials used in course work in various subjects for students' consultative.	6	8	19	67
Provide a general guidance on the importance of the library to your students.	10	21	36	33
Total	51(11.6)	56(13)	105(24)	187(43)

Table 4 above shows the extent to which academic staff assists and encourage students to use the library. Majority of them 187 (43%) rarely give students library based assignment, prepare reading list from the library collection, place materials on call or reserve for students to consult in the library nor give general guidance to them on the importance and use of libraries to study and learning experiences. This is followed by 105 (24%) who sometimes do. However, 5 (11.6%) claim that they regularly offer students necessary encouragement in the forms proffered above and 57(13%) said they did so often.

Table 5: Problems militating against use of library by faculty members

S/N	Problems	No. of responses	%
i.	Lack of current books / journals	139	31.2
ii.	Library facility is inconvenient to read or work in	34	7.8
iii.	Lack of electronic resources (internet/ relevant data base)	122	28
iv.	I am not aware of what the library holds in my field.	72	16.6
v.	The library does not have what I need	48	11
vi.	Don't find it easy to access materials in the library.	24	5.4

Table 5 above shows the problems encountered by academic staff in using the library. Majority of 136 (31.2%) of the respondents claim the library lacks current books and journals. This is followed by 122 (27%) who responded that the library lacks electronic resources/databases for them to use. Also a significant figure of 72 (16.6%) indicated that they were not aware of what resources their library hold for them while 48(11 %) indicated that the library does not have what they needed. A significant number, 24 (5.4%) of the academic staff claimed that they did not know or find it easy to access materials in the library.

DISCUSSION

From the total responses, the following issues and observations were found:-

Despite the critical role libraries play in academic institutions, the library of the Cross River University of Technology, Calabar is not effectively used by her academic staff. As it is observed, out of 436 respondents who answered the questionnaire in this survey, only 55 (12.6%) use the library regularly, 76 (17.4%) use the library often while a majority of 182 (41.8%) are occasional users and 123 (28.2%) rarely use the library.

It is observed that a significant number of 72 respondents representing 16.6% claimed that they were not aware of what their library collection holds for them. This suggests a gap in the public service function of the library. Put differently, it means the library is not doing enough to promote its services to her academic staff users. Also that 24 (5.4%) of academic staff find it difficult to access materials in the library is a cause for concern. Mitchell, Radford & Hegg (1991) proffered that the greatest causes of patron failure in the library were either library malfunctions or inability of patrons to use the library retrieval tools (card catalogue or subject catalogues) correctly. Some of the problems associated with library malfunctioning include inability of patrons to find desired titles from the library catalogue on the shelves, unshelved and stolen materials, materials checked out when desired or sometimes specific materials that were being searched for were not bought by the library. Since this study did not investigate the causes of user / patron failure, we cannot identify the problem academic staff have in this regard.

The study revealed that a majority of 207 (47.4%) of academic staff use the library to prepare lectures and teaching notes. If that was the case, it is expected that a high number of them should encourage or refer their students to explore these sources for further reading from their libraries. Contrary to this expectation, responses from these academic staff on the question of the extent to which they encouraged students to use the library shows that only 51 (11.6%) regularly did so, 57 (13%) did so often while 187 (43%) did so rarely and 105 (24%) sometimes did. It is obviously possible that the academic staff responses were a reflection of what they felt should be and so feigned answers to the question raised in order not to be perceived as unworthy. Also the fact that 16.6% of academic staff do not have knowledge or are not aware of what the library holds is an indication that staff were not making adequate use of the library. As Travers (1977), Torma & Vakkari (2004) averred that knowledge and awareness of available resource in a library is a high prediction of a library's frequency, exploitation and use.

On the problems militating against the use of the library by academic staff, a majority of them 136 (31.2%) claimed that their library lacks current books and journals while 48 (11%) said the library did not have what they needed. It is pertinent to note that Ray & Day (2000) rate collection factor highly in academic library use. Also the fact that 122 (28%) of the respondents stated that lack of electronic resources /relevant databases hindered their use of the library is an indication that ICT and electronic information resources are making significant impact in availability, access to and use of library materials by her patrons. Thus the provisions of electronic information resources must and need to be given due attention if libraries are to remain relevant to their patrons or clients needs.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

This survey was designed to study how academic staff of Cross River University of Technology, Calabar make use of the library and encourage their students to do the same. The findings show that academic staff were not making adequate use of the library neither were they doing enough to encourage their students to do so. Lack of current books and journals, inadequate promotion of what resources were available in the library and lack of electronic resources in the library were identified as major causes of the library's (underutilization?).

Based on the above findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Library management should strive to provide current and high quality books and other research needs. These collections should be adequate to support staff specific disciplines/faculty needs.
2. Electronic information resources have become invaluable tools for research, teaching and learning. More and more academic staff are becoming dependent on them for their academic work. Efforts should therefore be made to purchase, install, computerize and use on-line databases / other electronic resources in the library.
3. Students gain much from the library and use it when academic staff and librarians share a common goal. Improved literacy skills, bibliographic instruction and staff assistance must be provided for academic staff by librarians while academic staff too must

encourage their students to use libraries by promoting library use through giving them library-based assignments and course works to carry out in the library.

4. It is recognized that in order to promote library use, the librarians must communicate with their patrons, publicize and make them fully aware of their various services and potentials. Nelson (1973) recommends that librarians must be prepared and encouraged to exercise initiative in using more library resources to promote available services as well as to provide them consistently, completely and vigorously.

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