



Volume :2, Issue :5, 93-97
May 2015
www.allsubjectjournal.com
e-ISSN: 2349-4182
p-ISSN: 2349-5979
Impact Factor: 3.762

Chike Philip Aghadiuno
Department of Library and
Information Science
Nasarawa State Polytechnic,
Lafia, Nasarawa State

Amaoge Dorathy Agbo
Department of Library and
Information Science Michael
Okpara University of
Agriculture, Abia State,
Nigeria

**Nnamdi Emmanuel
Onyekweodiri**
University Library Michael
Okpara University of
Agriculture, Abia State,
Nigeria

Correspondence:
Chike Philip Aghadiuno
Department of Library and
Information Science
Nasarawa State Polytechnic,
Lafia, Nasarawa State

Accessibility and use of serials and other continuing resources in two university libraries

**Chike Philip Aghadiuno, Amaoge Dorathy Agbo,
Nnamdi Emmanuel Onyekweodiri**

Abstract

This study investigated the accessibility and use of serials and other continuing resources in two universities in North-Central zone of Nigeria. It sought to determine the accessibility of serials and other continuing resources, examine the use of serials and other continuing resources, identify the problems affecting use of serials and other continuing resources and proffer necessary strategies for enhancing use of serials and other continuing resources. A descriptive survey design was used for the study with a population of 1500 library users. Sample size of 300 representing 20% of the population was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. Percentages, mean scores and frequency tables were used in analyzing the data. The result obtained from the findings revealed that both serials and other continuing resources are accessible. It was equally found that the patrons make use of serials and other continuing resources. The study also shows that some of the difficulties encountered in accessing and using serials and other continuing resources includes but not limited to lack of borrowing facilities in serials section, inconvenient open/closing hours of serials, poor attitude of staff to users, inadequate reading facilities in the serials section, Power failure and poor network connection. Conclusion and recommendations were made based on the findings.

Keywords: Information access, Resources use, Serials, Libraries

1. Introduction

Information resources and services available in institutional information systems must be capable of supporting research activities among the students and faculty members Popoola (2008). Iyoro (2004) in his study identified accessibility as one of the pre-requisites of information use. Ugah (2007) opined that the more accessible information sources are, the more likely they are to be used and readers tend to use information sources that require the least effort to access. Ugah (2007) quoted Osundina (1974), who studied the relationship between accessibility and library use by undergraduates in Nigeria and noted that the problem of Nigerian students is not the question of wanting to use the library, but whether or not the university library can provide for their needs, and whether there is access to what is provided. This assertion was agreed to in later studies by Iyoro (2004) and Popoola (2008). In separate studies, Seth and Parida (2006), Ukaegbu (2008), Nnadozie and Nnadozie (2008) cautioned that availability of information resources and services does not automatically translate to information accessibility and use. Ukaegbu (2008) explained further in his study that the problems of transmission, storage, and display of information have been combined with the problem of getting information to users quickly. Aina (2001) writes on access to scientific and technological information in Nigeria, revealing that of the 7,014 scientific papers published between 1900 and 1975, 5,607 (79%) are journal articles and 1,116 or (20%) of these journal articles were not indexed or abstracted, making them inaccessible. Further analysis shows that 77% of the papers not covered by any indexing or abstracting services were published in Nigeria. He recommends the establishment of a National Science Information Centre to acquire, organize, and disseminate scientific information sources in Nigeria and other places. Farrington (1997) identifies natural and artificial barriers to free access to information. The library's poor reputation was attributed to lack of accessibility of information sources. Iyoro (2004) examines the impact of serial publications in the promotion of educational excellence among information professionals receiving further training at the University of Ibadan. The study looks at the perception of how serials accessibility has contributed to students' learning process. Serials were found to play a significant role in the acquisition of knowledge, because the serial collection was easily and conveniently accessible.

In a similar study by Sanguwusi (2003) at Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, low use of the

library by students was observed. This was attributed to expressed accessibility problems. Perault (1994) has identified accessibility as one of the prerequisites of information use while Lombardo and Condic (2001) argues that the action of information seeking depends on the needs, the perceived accessibility, sources, and information seeking habits. Although online searching and electronic bibliographic databases are now available in almost every field which confirms that as information expands, the ability of the user to process and /or access it remains fixed (Seth and Parida 2002). It is on this note that Adhikari (2000) reveal that efforts are being made worldwide to promote access to information in all formats. They lament the attendant features of underdevelopment such as power failure, machine breakdowns, and lack of spare parts and technicians, which intermittently stall the performance of the modern gadgets of information storage and transfer in developing countries.

Objective of the Study

The broad aim of the study is to examine the accessibility and use of serials and other continuing resources in two university libraries. The specific objectives are to:

- i. Determine the accessibility of serials and other continuing resources in the two university libraries.
- ii. Examine the use of serials and other continuing resources in the two university libraries.
- iii. Identify the problems affecting use of serials and other continuing resources in the two university libraries.
- iv. Proffer necessary strategies for enhancing use of serials and other continuing resources in the two university libraries.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of the study encompasses the accessibility and use of serials and other continuing resources in two university libraries in North-Central Zone of Nigeria. However the study has the following limitations:

- (a) The study is limited to university of Jos, Jos and Nasarawa State University, Keffi.
- (b) The study involves only the library users.
- (c) The study is limited to accessibility and use of serials and other continuing resources.

Literature Review

Acquisitions and organization of serials and other continuing resources are for the benefit of users and they should know this. Rusbridger (2002) observed that the use of serials is the fundamental rationale behind all the effort in the serials department and in the absence of usage the unit should be shutdown. Also Faluwoye (1995) emphasized the fact that only if use is intensive and takes place under optimal condition can all efforts and funds be justified that are spent on the acquisition and organization of serials. Chiou-sen (1995) said that the advancement of science depends to a large extent on the accumulation of past findings, and every scientist builds on the knowledge of scientists. This has to do with use. In fact; there are hundreds of millions of print serials, Web pages, bibliographical databases, and full-text databases available on the Internet (Prasher, 2003). The use of these resources is the ultimate objective of the acquisition and processing of serials in a library (Faluwoye, 1995). Elliot (2003) highlight that the of use of serials and other continuing resources for information by research scholars and students informed management decision to lay greater emphasis on their acquisitions and organization in the

university's collection development policy. The authors found that scholars use serials on the internet for research and communication purposes, and conclude that more awareness about electronic resources and training in their use should be provided by library professionals.

Biradar, (2006) conducted a study on serials use at Kuvempur University. The results indicated that 42 percent of students use the serials publications often than before because of their electronic format. The majority of students and faculty use serials and continuing resources for study and teaching. They use the physical serials in the library, as well as access the electronic version through remote access, nay the Internet. Farrington (1997) conducted a study on the use of serials resources by post graduate students for new discoveries and thesis writing at that level. The study revealed that use of serials publication is quite the norm, the difficulties encountered were lack of time; dissatisfaction with the software available, copyright issues and power failure.

Recent studies on use of print and electronic resources in the professional literature are quite revealing. Tenopir (2003) in an exhaustive review of the literature on the subject analyzed the results of over 200 studies of the use of print and electronic resources in libraries published between 1995 and 2003. The main conclusion of this review is that print and electronic resources have been rapidly adopted in academic spheres, though users favour electronic resources to print format. Two reviews of the literature reveal past serials use by faculty and post graduate students for research (King & Tenopir, 2002) and how that use is increasing through evolutionary phases such as acquisitions of non-print format (Kling & Callahan, 2003). A growing body of research indicates how professionals with subject expertise use and interact with journal literature (Pullinger & Baldwin, 2002). Reports of use patterns consistently find that scientists in all work fields use and value peer reviewed journal articles, but there are considerable differences in the amount that they use print sources (Tenopir & King, 2002; Kling & McKim, 2000). Physicists, for example, have always relied on preprints and now make heavy use of serials and continuing resources e-print services. Engineers read fewer scholarly materials per year on average than scientists, but spend more time reading each article they deem relevant (Tenopir & King, 2003). Medical faculty with PhD degrees recommends mostly serials publications in their reading list, than thereby enhancing the use of serials (Tenopir, King, & Bush, 2003). Scientists who work in academia generally read and use serials more than those in corporations or government laboratories (Tenopir & King, 2002). All non-medical university scientists report fewer personal book subscriptions and rely more on serials subscriptions paid for by the university library (King *et al.*, 2003). Some highly collaborative fields (notable high energy physics) use journal alternatives (such as e-print servers) heavily, while others continue to use more traditional journals in print form. Electronic articles in many forms are used by scientists although print is still quite popular. Even with electronic versions, a majority of readings are printed out for reading. It may be the nature of the way research is conducted in a specific scientific work field that results in higher reliance on serials and continuing resources or it may be it easy availability. Faluwoye (1995) opined that use by the reader is the ultimate objective of the acquisition and organization of serials in a library. He emphasized the fact that only if use is intensive and takes place under optimal conditions can all the

efforts and funds are spent on the acquisition of serials be justified.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was used for the study with a population of 1500 users from both university. Sample size

of 300 (20%) of the population was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaires and observation checklist. Percentages, mean scores and frequency tables were used in analyzing the data.

Analysis of Data

Tables 1: Distribution and return rate of Questionnaire

S/N	University	Number of questionnaires distributed	Number Returned	Percentage of distribution %
1	University of Jos, Jos	199	190	66.7
2	Nasarawa State University, Keffi	101	95	33.3
	Total	300	285	100

From the table above, 190(66.7%) of the respondents were from UNIJOS, while 95(33.3%) of the respondents were from NSUK.

In summary it can be seen that the research comprises majority of the respondents from UNIJOS.

Table 2: Distributions of Respondents by Designation

Designation	Frequency	Percentage
Staff	85	29.8
Undergraduate	135	47.4
Postgraduate	65	22.8
Total	285	100

From the table above, 85(29.8%) of the respondents were staff; (29.8%) of the respondents were undergraduate, while 65(22.8%) of the respondents were from Postgraduate. In

summary it can be seen that the research comprises majority of Undergraduate.

Table 3: Mean ratings of respondents on accessibility of serials and continuing resources in the library

Types of serials & continuing resources	University						Total		Decision
	UNIJOS			NSUK			Mean	SD	
	Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision			
Serials	2.73	1.288	Accessible	2.63	1.289	Accessible	2.69	1.287	Accessible
Continuing resources: databases, updating loose-leaf, websites	2.64	1.107	Accessible	2.36	1.042	Less Accessible	2.55	1.092	Accessible

The above table shows the mean ratings of respondents on how accessible are serials and continuing resources in the library. Accordingly, serials is accessible in both UNIJOS and NSUK (\bar{x} =2.73 and \bar{x} =2.69 respectively), while Continuing resources: databases, updating loose-leaf,

websites is accessible in only UNIOS (\bar{x} =2.64). Finally, the overall mean shows that both serials and Continuing resources: databases, updating loose-leaf, websites are accessible.

Table 4: Mean ratings of respondents on patrons use of serials and other continuing resources in the two university libraries

Types of serials and continuing resources	University				Total		Decision
	UNIJOS		NSUK		MEAN	SD	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Serial	3.03	1.096	3.00	1.120	3.02	1.102	Agree
Continuing resources: databases, updating loose-leaf, websites	2.56	1.076	2.55	1.089	2.53	1.079	Agree

The above table shows the mean ratings of respondents on patrons use serials and other continuing resources in the two university libraries. It is observed that, patrons use serials

and other continuing resources in UNIJOS and NSUK (\bar{x} =3.02 and \bar{x} =2.53 respectively).

Table 5: Mean ratings of respondents on problems patrons encounter in the use of serials and other continuing resources.

Problems	University						Total		
	UNIJOS			NSUK			Mean	SD	Decision
	Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision			
1 Availability of current serials and continuing resources	2.03	.943	Agree	2.18	.966	Agree	2.11	.950	Disagree
2 Inaccessibility to serials and continuing resources	2.77	.906	Agree	2.69	.900	Agree	2.75	.903	Agree
3 Lack of borrowing facilities in serials section	2.66	.962	Agree	2.54	.976	Agree	2.62	.967	Agree
4 Inconvenient open/closing hours of serials	3.14	.739	Agree	3.07	.789	Agree	3.12	.755	Agree
5 Poor attitude of staff to users	3.17	.812	Agree	3.02	.922	Agree	3.12	.852	Agree
6 Inadequate reading facilities in the serials section	3.24	.773	Agree	3.18	.875	Agree	3.22	.807	Agree

7	Many of the serials are defaced	3.10	.826	Agree	2.94	.920	Agree	3.05	.861	Agree
8	Many of the serials are mutilated	3.05	.815	Agree	2.89	.856	Agree	3.00	.831	Agree
9	Many of the serials are not well displayed	2.97	1.08	Agree	2.96	.967	Agree	2.96	1.006	Agree
10	Power failure/interruption affect continuing resources	3.03	.866	Agree	2.94	.897	Agree	3.00	.876	Agree
11	Poor network connection affect continuing resources	2.59	.975	Agree	2.51	1.030	agree	2.55	.993	Agree

Table 6 above presents the mean ratings of respondents on problems patrons encounter in the use of serials and other continuing resources. The respondents accepted the patrons encounter the entire above mention problem, except

Availability of current serials and continuing resources (\bar{x} =2.11).

Table 6: Percentage distributions of Respondents view on how serials and continuing resources use can be improved.

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
proper orientation on use of library to students	101	35.4
provision of library resources	34	11.9
increase of library hour	95	33.3
punishment of library defaulters	55	19.3
Total	285	100.0

The table above shows that 101(35.4%) of the respondents indicated proper orientation on use of library to students; 34(11.9%) of the respondents indicated proper orientation on use of library to students; 95(33.3%) of the respondents

indicated increase of library hour, while 55(19.3%) of the respondents indicated punishment of library defaulters. Hence, majority of the respondents are of the opinion that proper orientation on use of library to students will improve the use of serials and continuing resources.

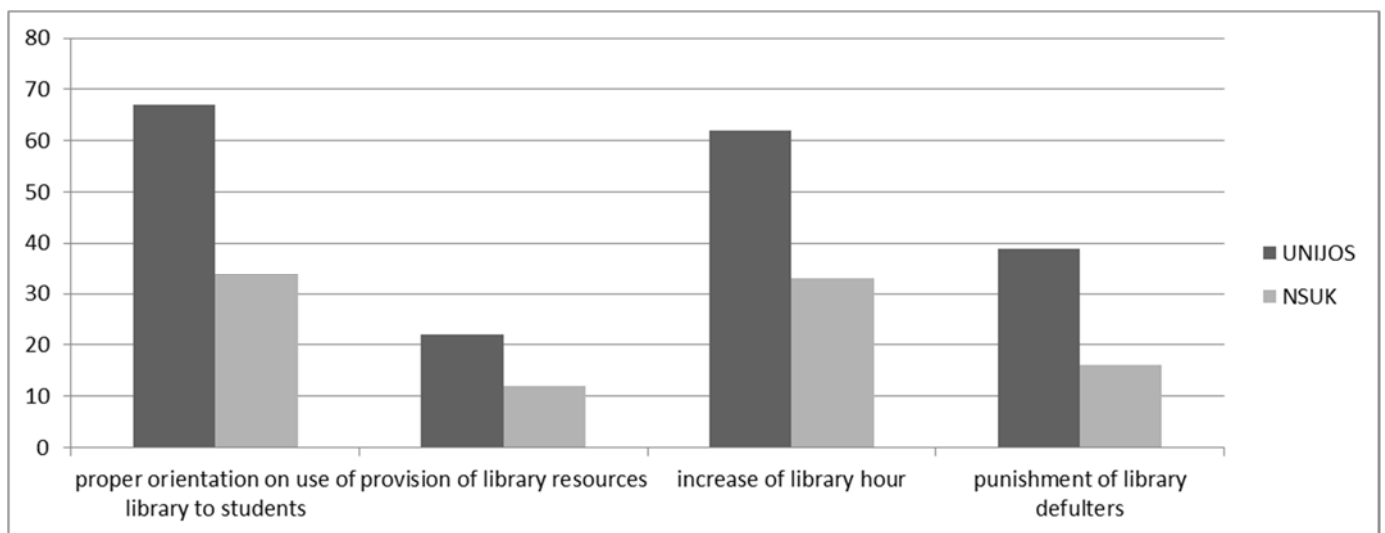


Fig 1: Illustration of how serials and continuing resources use can be improved by UNIJOs and NSUK

Findings

As revealed from the tables, the response shows that both serials and continuing resources: databases, updating loose-leaf, websites are accessible. Iyoro (2004) in his study identified accessibility as one of the pre-requisites of information use. Ugah (2008) equally opined that the more accessible information sources are, the more likely they are to be used and readers tend to use information sources that require the least effort to access.

It was equally found that the patrons use serials and other continuing resources in UNIJOs and NSUK. But it is conspicuous that they use more of serials than other continuing resources. Bansode and Pujar, (2008) highlight that the of use of serials and other continuing resources for information by research scholars and students informed management decision to lay greater emphasis on their acquisitions and organization in the university’s collection development policy. The authors found that scholars use serials on the Internet for research and communication

purposes, and conclude that more awareness about electronic resources and training in their use should be provided by library professionals.

The study equally revealed that some of the difficulties encountered in accessing and using serials and other continuing resources includes but not limited to the following: inaccessibility of serials and other continuing resources, lack of borrowing facilities in serials section, inconvenient open/closing hours of serials, poor attitude of staff to users, inadequate reading facilities in the serials section, Power failure, Poor network connection, etc. Ugah (2008) quoted Osundina (1974), who studied the relationship between accessibility and library use by undergraduates in Nigeria and noted that the problem of Nigerian students is not the question of wanting to use the library, but whether or not the university library can provide for their needs, and whether there is access to what is provided.

Conclusion/Recommendations

Serials and other continuing resources are one of the most important resources that faculties, postgraduate and undergraduate students rely on for teaching, study and research. As averred by Elaturoti, Fagbeja, Kolade and Oniyide (1990), researchers are relying more upon serials and continuing resources than books because the information contained in them is more current than those in published books. It therefore calls for maintenance of serials holdings to meet users' needs in the library environment. The work therefore recommend that:

- ❖ Efforts should be made to provide assisted serials resources like generator/power plant, electricity supply, ICT manager, funds, Website, good bandwidth qualitative computers system and CD-ROMs, to increase the use of online in accessing serial and other continuing resources.
- ❖ The libraries and university management should embark on planning, policy implementation of effective specialized library facilities.

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