Community Need Assessment of the University of Calabar Library

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Abstract

This study evaluated the community needs assessment of the Definitive Library University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. The cluster sampling technique was used to select the humanities division of the library, a questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection and response was received from 51 users who assessed the library one month after the resumption of the semester. The study found out that the major users of the library was students (Graduate and Undergraduate); Staff (academic and non-academic) also used the library for course assignment, research writing, reading (journals, magazine) and teaching. The facility of the library was rated poor and some needs were not met because some books used were not properly shelved after use. It was recommended that librarians should obey the rules of the library if they want the users to obey them and since the library is supposed to be a quiet place; librarians should try as much as possible to maintain absolute quietness in the library premises.

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INTRODUCTION

The library is a serene facility that houses myriad form of information resources that meet the information needs (research, leisure, entertainment, teaching, and learning) of its host community. This unique function of the library is the reason why the library has to go beyond its boundary to source, acquire and make available information carriers that meet their user community need. Lawal (2010) posits that libraries generally are repositories of knowledge much respected and valued by elites of society. Jim, R. president, American Literary

Association (ALA) 2008-2009, describes libraries as "the only providers of universally accessible lifelong learning opportunities". As stated above, libraries do not exist in isolation; they exist in various spheres of the society with the aim of promoting teaching, learning, research, culture and recreation.

According to Ottong and Okwueze (2008), Academic libraries are established to serve institution of higher learning or tertiary institutions such as universities, colleges of education and polytechnics. University libraries are central to learning and they play some major roles which include: serving as a catalyst for literacy, encouraging reading for teaching, innovation, problem solving, cultural building, deep thinking, scaffolding inquiry into learning, provision of support to researchers, improvement of social and cultural life, access to information both current and past. Indeed, the university library is a learning environment for the whole university community and at such; the hopes of the library users shouldn't be dashed when they access the library, rather their confidence on the library should be built up as their information needs are met.

According to Manson (2012), one fundamental aim of libraries and their staff has been to formulate a philosophy of intellectual freedom and to provide access to all sources of information. He opines that libraries attempt to meet the needs of a diverse and complex group of users who have a variety of special interest and demands that must be met. The user community that accesses the academic library amongst others include: undergraduates and graduates students (special or handicapped students) full time researchers, teachers, external users, people from other professions and the general public. These users have different kinds of needs which vary according to their discipline and profession.

Statement of the Problem

The university community is not static rather it is fraught with change and adjustment to change, how do academic libraries within a university environment address and meet the evolving needs of her patrons in the university community? Are the growing needs of these users met? Do users get information when it is needed? In light of the complexity of the Academic library, its hybrid state and nature, it is imperative to carry out a community need assessment of the university of Calabar library to ascertain if the need of the user community is met or left unmet when they consult the library.

Brief History of University of Calabar Library

The University of Calabar was one of seven universities established in 1975 by the federal military government of Nigeria as part of its 3rd National Development plan. The university grew out of the Calabar Campus of the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN) which began functioning in the 1973/74 academic session. In October 1976, the University of Calabar became autonomous and as part of its start up, it inherited over 300 volumes of books and skeletal staff from the defunct Calabar campus of UNN. This information resources inherited, formed the Nucleus of the university of Calabar library which assumed full status of a university library in 1976 and began operating in that capacity ever since.

As a central element in the university's educational role, the library supports and facilitates the achievement of programmes offered in the faculties through journals and other information resources for teaching, learning and research.

The university of Calabar library called the definitive library has a H shaped four storey building and a useable floor area of about 2,700m2, seating capacity for 3,000 with readers and other physical facilities which include; 1600 seats, 16 staff offices, a 200KVA generating set etc. As at September, 2011 the library's total holding is 150,000 volumes of

books, over 900 volumes of bound forms, 4,400 titles of monograph and others serials to support the academic and research work in the university. There are special collection of various current books in social science and humanities (2001-2011). The library as from March 2011 was a beneficiary of e-library consisting of 75 computers with internet connectivity. The visual technology library software (VTLS) covers discipline offered in the university. The library enjoys currently renewed (2011-2014): NDC/ETT, Ebscohost database online subscription as well as library philanthropic initiatives like Agora, HINARI, ORAL and TEEAL. It also enjoys Elders Adi Ekong indigenous literature collection and Afro-American Caribbean literature etc.

Staffing and Services

The total staff strength of the library is two hundred and nine (209) comprising, 54 professionals, 68 Para-professionals and 87 junior staff. Services rendered by the library include; lending, reference, user education, current awareness/selective dissemination of information, and Information Technology (IT) services, e-library services, reprographic services, bindery services, recreational services etc.

Users

Registered library users include undergraduates, post graduates, teaching and non-teaching staff. Library rules and regulations regulate the use of library resources and behaviour of users.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to assess the community needs of users of the humanities unit of the Definitive Library, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to:

- Determine who use the library;
- Examine frequency of use of the library;
- Reading materials mostly used;
- Investigate reasons for using the library;
- Examine how users locate materials;
- Find out where users need help in accessing information resources;
- Determine Users opinion of library services and facilities;
- Distribution of conduciveness of library to providing library services; and
- Helpfulness of library staff in sourcing information for users and staff cooperation

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information, knowledge and wisdom are building blocks of the society and this is what the library actually offers to the community where it is located, at certain times, access to information and knowledge is usually difficult especially in developing countries where it takes lot of money to build a library collection that will serve the users or client, with university campuses not being an exception.

It is the duty of any library to provide enough information resources to meet the users need whenever the user visits the library. This is in line with kaniki (2007) who said the basic philosophy upon which library and information services were founded from the earliest times

and through their development in history has been to serve the communities within which they are established.

Similarly, the five laws of library science as formulated by Raganathan (1931) further buttresses how the users of library should be attended to; the laws were also designed to provide the librarian with an idea on how the library should run. However, the principles stated by Raganathan can only be achieved when the library functions in its full capacity by appropriately selecting, disseminating and meeting the information needs of the community of users.

According to Ifejah (2011) libraries' should endeavor to capitalize on, improve and nurture its culture of excellent customer services in order to enhance its image in the eyes of its users. He further suggested that identifying the distinct group of users and their needs will help the library to concentrate on the productive services to supply and also create an opportunity to discover ways to meet users' need.

Umunna (2010) Opines that a library needs to satisfy its users in order to engender increased patronage, promote improved public perceptions of its community value and covert it cliental form episodic to effective and habitual library users. Thus, there is need for subject specialists in various disciplines covered by the library who will handle the selection, purchase and dissemination of information resources. This duty or responsibility will only be effective if a user's need assessment is conducted regularly to determine the strength, opportunity, weakness and threats of the library as it concerns the satisfaction of the users and the user community. The above is in line with Agyen – Gyasi (2008) who stated that the subject librarian acts as a single point of contact between the library and faculty. This he says promotes a more detailed awareness of user needs and ensures that the library's collections are balanced and in line with the interest of users.

Outsell a research and advisory committee conducted a research on users' need assessment of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Library in 2006 with the aim of identifying the current and potential customers, and to determine the view of existing potential customers toward the USDA library. Outsell found out that the National Agriculture library has the opportunity to become the number one resource centre for all things related to foods, Agriculture and forestry. They observed through the questionnaire used that more than half of the respondents are not aware of the library's collection and the quality of information National Agriculture Library (NAL) has, remains underutilized. It opines that NAL needs to direct its energy in the web environment and frequently market its digital offering.

Perlay, Genb, Fleming and Sen (2007) also conducted a user centered information needs assessment; The via Christi library's experience using qualitative and qualitative data from 1,295 self-reporting survey, 75 telephone interviews and 2 focus groups were collected and analyzed to address these two (2) questions: how could the libraries best serve their patrons given realistic limitations on time, resources and personal, and How best can the library help its institution improve patient care and outcome. The researchers found out that there is need for just in time information accessible at the point of care, library users emphasized the need to market library services and resources. The respondent further emphasized the need of a customized information service to meet their professional information needs in the organization.

Clougherty, Froy, Lyles, Persson, Walter and Washington–Hoagland (1998) carried out an undergraduate user needs assessment of the University of Lowa libraries using 17,908 undergraduate student enrolled during the fall semester in 1997, a stratified random sample of approximately 10 percent of the undergraduate population was used, data analysis was done using chi square. The result showed that they library needs to be re-molded and refurbished; the respondents expressed frustration at not being able to locate needed library materials. This

is as a result of the kind of service rendered by the librarians, the services desk and awareness of library services and resources.

Related study conducted in Botwana according to Nnadozie (2000) quoting Muthali et al (1994) evaluated library services for masters students of University of Botswana and revealed that the library did not meet some of the objectives it is meant to achieve, while Amkpa (2000) showed that students of the University of Maiduguri see their institution's library as a place of study and borrow books among other reasons for library use.

Similarly, Adeniran (2011) studied user satisfaction with academic library services in Redeemers University and the study revealed that the academic staff and students who formed the population for the study students were found to have used the library most, the frequent study showed that the students were satisfied with the library's services, but the library needs to improve upon its services. Tella, Owolabi, & Attama, (2009) studied students use of library in Akanu Ibiam Federal polytechnic, Unwana, Abia State, Nigeria. The study revealed that students use their school library mostly to read, students are satisfied with the library collections, but not with electronic information services. This study shows that students are attached to the school library and that they place more importance to the library as it meets their information and academic needs.

Ugah (2007) citing Oyesiku and Oduwole (2007) carried out an Evaluation on the use of University libraries in Nigeria: A case study of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike using 1000 registered library users in the university; His study revealed that both the students and staff use the library, although students are the major user and most of them use the library 2-3 times a week and they access the library to read books, do course assessment, consult reference materials as well as other library services. He also revealed that most students do not make effective use of the library because they walk to the shelf without knowing how to find the materials they need, while others seek help from library staff. The studies further revealed that collection were inadequate to meet users, demand, even when 83% of users are not trained in information retrieval. The study recommends various strategies to market library faculties as services.

Oseghale (2008) who studied faculty opinion as a collection evaluation method of the redeemers University library stated that library users judge a collection by the extent to which it can meet their teaching, learning and research requirement, he asserted that if Nigerian academic libraries are to be seen as being relevant to their communities they must ensure that their collection are not in variance with the curriculum, he said one of the ways to accomplish this is to seek the opinions of academic staff users in developing and evaluating the collection. In essence the library's collection can satisfy users need if they address the curriculum need of the parent institution.

Inyokwe (2006) studied Evaluation of medical Library collections in Universities in South- south zone of Nigeria the target population for this study comprises books and journal as may be contained in the medical libraries of the universities in the south-south geopolitical region of Nigeria with a sample of three universities drawn from the population and structured interview and participant observation were used. The researcher undertook on-the-spot assessment of available medical library holdings of the universities of Calabar, Uyo and Port Harcourt the research revealed that in terms of quantity and currency, none of the universities met the minimum standard required. Details of the finding show that the University of Calabar owns a total journal collection of 880 (3.2%) university of Uyo has only 43 (0.1%) University of Port Harcourt possesses 692 (1.4%) Journals while the minimum standard for journals collection is 50,000 volumes.

Iyishu (2000) carried out a research on the assessment of the services and problems of the reader services division of the polytechnic of Calabar Library, the researcher found out that the library does not have adequate facilities to satisfy the users. The Mortenson Center

(2010) observed that Nigerian users of the University library are often faced with a dark library, with little of no access to computers, outdated materials, few journals, dilapidated seats and tables. They opined that libraries were used for reading halls and classroom

Finally Kurts (2004) has noted that a company that seeks to satisfy the customer by providing him value for what he buys and the quality he expects will get more repeat business and referral business, reduced complaints and better patronage. Therefore libraries are expected to develop system, philosophies and strategies for managing and providing quality services. The services rendered can only be said to be qualitative and effective only when information materials in the library matches the needs of its user community. Based on the literature reviewed, it was noticed that no work has been done on users need assessment of the Definitive library, university of Calabar, literature of needs assessment in Nigerian university libraries is rare, the methodology adopted for this study and the population is different from what others have done and this is the gap this study intended to fill.

METHODOLOGY

This study evaluated the humanities unit of the Definitive Library University of Calabar, the humanities units was selected using a cluster sample technique. The main instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire which was administered to users that accessed the library for the first one month after the resumption of the first semester after which 51 copies of questionnaire were retrieved from the library and analysis was done using simple percentage. During analysis frequencies were computed from responses to the questions and converted to percentages.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1a: Status of Users

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Students	40	78
Staff	11	22
Others	0	0
Total	**51**	**100**

Table 1b: Gender of Users

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	36	71%
Female	15	29%
Total	**51**	**100**

40(78%) of respondents in table 1a were students, while 11(20%) were staff. Therefore, students constitute the majority of users in the university community. Similarly, in Table 1b, 36(71%) of the users of the library are male while 15(20%) of the users are female.

Table 2: Frequency of use of library

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Daily	20	39
Weekly	22	43
Monthly	6	12
Rarely	3	6
Total	**51**	**100**

22(43%) of the users used the library 1-5 times week, while 20(39%) used the library daily except on Sundays, 6(12%) used the library 1-2 times monthly. Only 3(6%) rarely use the library.

Table 3: Reading Materials Mostly Used

Materials	Frequency	Percentage
Text books	20	39
References materials	2	4
Project reports	15	29
Newspaper/magazine	5	10
Journals	4	8
Texts books projects	5	10
Total	**51**	**100**

20(39%) of users visit the library to read text books, 15(29%) visit the library to consult project work, 5(10%) visit the library for Newspaper/magazine 5 (10%) also visit for text book and projects 4(8%) visit the library for journals while 2(4%) make use of references materials.

Table 4: Reason for Use of the Library

	Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
A	For research purposes	25	49
B	Do class assignment	8	15.6
C	Reading	5	9.8
D	Research and leisure	1	2
E	For a & b	4	7.9
F	Research and writing	1	2
G	Assignment, research, leisure	5	9.8
H	Research, leisure & Teaching purpose	2	3.9
	Total	**51**	**100**

25(49%) to the library for research purpose only, 8(15.6%) came to the library to do assignment, 5(9.8%) used the library for reading 1(2%) used the library for research and leisure, 4(7.9%) used the library for research as assignment, 1(2%) used the library for research and writing, 4(9.8%) used the library for assignment, research, leisure which 2(3.9%) used the library for the purpose of research, leisure and teaching planning.

Table 5: How Users Locate Materials

Means	Frequency	Percentage
Shelves	25	49
Card Catalogue	26	51
Total	**51**	**100**

26(51%) of users said the locate materials through the catalogue while 25(49%) said the locate materials by going straight to the shelf.

Table 6: Where Users need help in Accessing Information Resources

Materials	Frequency	Percentage
References materials	40	78
Project	10	20
Text books	1	2
Total	**51**	**100**

40(78%) of users need help to find references materials, 10(20%) need help to find project work while 1(2%) need help to find text books.

Table 7: Users Opinion of Library Services and Facilities

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very good	7	14
Good	13	25
Fair	16	31
poor	14	27
Total	**51**	**100**

The largest number of respondents 16(31%) said the library facilities and services are fair while 14(27%) rated them poor and 13(25%) rated the facilities and services good and 7(14%) rated it very good.

Table 8: Distribution of Conduciveness of Library to Providing Library Services

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Very good	7	14
Good	12	24
Fair	15	29
Poor	17	33
Total	**51**	**100**

17(33%) rated the conduciveness of the library in providing library facilities poor, 15(29%) rated it fair 12(24%) of users rated the conduciveness of the library in providing services good and 7(14%) rated it very good.

Table 9a: Helpfulness of Staff in Sourcing for Materials

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Always	11	21.5
Sometimes	20	39
Rarely	12	23.5
Never	8	15.6
Total	**51**	**100**

Table 9b Staff Cooperation

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Always	14	27
Sometimes	25	49
Rarely	12	24
Total	**51**	**100**

In 9a, 20(39%) of users said staff offer help sometimes, 12(23.3%) said staff rarely after help them, while 11 (21.5%) said staff always offer help and 8 (15.6%) said staff are never helpful.

In 9b, 25(49%) of the respondents "sometimes" got staff cooperation, 14(27%) of respondents "always" got staff cooperation while 12(24%) of respondents "rarely" got staff cooperation.

DISCUSSION

The community of the definitive Library University of Calabar comprises mainly of students and staff, although students constitute the majority of users as shown in table 1. Most respondents use the library 2 -5 times a week or daily as shown in table 2. This revealed that a majority of users use the library.

Many reasons where stated by the users why they use the library and this includes. For assignment, research, leisure, Teaching purposes, reading, writing, to consult reference materials, borrow books and consult journals etc. this is can be found in table 3.

Books needed in the library are located using the catalogue card and most of the books are properly catalogue although some respondent expressed regrets that most books are not shelved and cannot be located through the catalogue. However, most people do not locate the materials needed because they go straight to the shelf. The user's opinion as regards library facilities indicates that the library facilities are fair, although some comments on the questionnaire revealed that the library is poorly ventilated. 25(49%) of the respondents said they receive staff cooperation sometimes to source for materials, 14(27%) said they always receive cooperation from staff while 12(24%) said they rarely receive staff cooperation in sourcing for materials.

CONCLUSION

Keeping balanced and adequate collection development has been a problem in library management in most Nigerian universities due to low budget allocation and users' needs are not properly met because of unqualified workforce in the library who operate under the minimal level of fear and incompetence. The study revealed that most needs are not met because most members of the library work force are not liberal and this makes them to be conservative and static at a position instead of helping a user in need. This have also accounted for the reason why book consulted by users are left unattended to on the desk,

thereby making it difficult for it to be locate materials using catalogue cards. It is therefore recommended that collection development be given a priority and the workforce be reoriented on how to relate with users in other to achieve the aim of the establishment of the library taking a clues from Raganathan's five law of library services. The infrastructure of the library should be looked into in order to create a conducive reading environment for users and books used by patrons should be properly shelved after they have been consulted by the users and there should be enforcement of the library's law on the library officers as it concerns the maintenance of library ethics in the library.

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