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## Reference Services and Survey of Users Satisfaction in Academic Libraries in Rivers State Nigeria

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### Abstract

This paper investigates reference services and a survey of users satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State. A survey method was used to sample opinion of library users on satisfaction with reference services. The correlational research design was adopted. The population of the study is four thousand users (4,000). The stratified simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample. The sample is three hundred and ninety four users (394). Three hypotheses and three research questions guided the study. The instrument used a (15) item liker type scale questionnaire titled Reference Services And User Satisfaction Of Academic Libraries (RSUSQ) which was validated-by experts in measurement and evaluation department. The reliability test was analyze using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient (PPMC) and also the split half method was used. The correlation coefficient of 0.83 was obtained indicating that it was consistent and reliable. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between reference services and users satisfaction. It was recommended that librarians should be alive to their statutory duties of assisting the readers to get the necessary information at the right time.

**Keywords:** Reference Services, Survey, Users, Satisfaction, Academic Libraries, Rivers State Nigeria.

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### INTRODUCTION

The library is said to be the house of knowledge, it provides reading and instructional materials in support of the learning process in an educational system. Libraries are centers to which all other academic activities revolve. That is why it is said that “Library feeds the intellect of the students, encourages the research of faculties and unites all who enters its house to partake fully in its intellectual and cultural fair Edem and Ofre 2008. Reference services is at the heart of all libraries in every sector, be it academic, public or special. According to Opara (2006) reference service is the act of bringing into contact the right reader and the right information sources at the right time and the right period. A reference library is not merely for the provision of information resources but to help library uses find the information they desire. Although every aspect of librarianship are concerned with this aspect. It is at the reference desk that the process of

determining the user's needs, formulating a search strategy to fill the need, and providing accurate and complete information to the library use is finally tested.

However, the evaluation of reference service provides the library and reference librarian a clear understanding of the services delivered. Libraries should make sure that the information given to users is useful and at the right level /loughorough university library (2005). The reference service must conform to user expectation, to suit individual circumstance. The mission of the reference division of the library is to anticipate and effectively meet the information needs of all, its users in timely, accurate and professional manner by buying the library resources and potential users through a variety of services.

Moreso, the user survey is often used as a tool to assess service quality and user satisfaction. The user survey will help provide library managers to enhance the user satisfaction. According to Akinde and Adagunde (2000), expectation of the user is high when sourcing and retrieving information. To satisfy the needs of the users, the human and material resources have to be adequately met.

Furthermore, the reference service is professional effort of libraries to link users with the right information Edem and Mkpufin (2015). The reference service task variety of forms including direct personal assistance, readers advisory, search services, inter-library loan etc, dissemination of information. It is in anticipation of users needs or interest, and direct end user access to an information system via telecommunication hardware and software.

The researcher observed that most users complain of low quality services, and some are not even conversant with the reference library. There is therefore the need to determine the extent of the reference services, like personal assistance, inter-library loan and search services and a survey of users satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State Nigeria.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The study was conducted to investigate reference services and a survey of users satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- Find out whether there is a relationship between personal assistance services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State.
- Determine whether there is a relationship between search services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State.
- Examine whether there is a relationship between inter-library loan services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

- What is the relationship between personal assistance services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State?
- What is the relationship between search services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State?
- What is the relationship between inter-library loan services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State?

## **Hypotheses**

- There is no significant relationship between personal assistance services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State.
- There is no significant relationship between search services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State.
- There is no significant relationship between inter-library loan services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Studies have shown that the reference library which is part of the main library, most times have library staff who are not well experience, thereby posing the problem of not meeting user's demand when it comes to personal assistance. These however may lead to users dissatisfaction. Satisfaction can be measured in terms of users reaction to staff, the library setting and information provided. The main goal of the reference library is to provide appropriate reference assistance to library users, at the point of need, if this objective is not met then reference services becomes inefficient. There the Ranganathan law of save the time of the user is flawed. It is against this backdrop that the researcher is conducting this study to determine if reference services satisfy users in academic libraries in Rivers State Nigeria. If not proffer solution to it.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The academic libraries connects people to the world of knowledge. The university libraries is recognized as the basics for teaching learning and research King (2005) mentioned that the information needs and expectations are continuously changing in the rapidly changing information scenarios. Libraries needs to re-orientate their collections, services and facilities to keep pace with these advancement. The academic libraries are focusing on evaluation of users needs and satisfaction with their services.

According to Nwalo (2003) lending books to the client is one of the major functions in libraries. That is to say the library must go extra mile to get the information needed by the users, even if it is not available in that library. The reference librarian has to go for inter-library loan, just to make sure the user gets the information needed, thereby satisfying the users.

Ofre, Odu and Okwueze (2004) states that reference services in Nigerian universities involves the giving of assistance of the reference division staff to library users who are in need of information. The reference service involves not only locating the information resources, but also sorting out relevant information and failure to satisfy such needs may lead to user frustration.

Moreso, Imbus & Adung (2010) opined that guiding users on how to use library has become necessary because of the increase in publications as well as the resulting complexity of libraries especially academic libraries and their services.

Edem, Ntui and Edamagbor see search services as the reference librarian assistance to users in finding resources using readers advisory tools and personal recommendations. This has to do with understanding the library's catalogue use and the ability to do effective searching which is crucial to users success in their use of the library.

Research studies have been conducted to investigate user satisfaction with library services in developing countries. The main academic and research library of King Fahd university of

petroleum and minerals organized a study using a walk through evaluation and questionnaire survey to investigate user satisfaction. The study was based on 22 elements of performance. It recommends for improved services.

Martenson and Ghronholdt (2003) based on the literature reviewed and focus groups have identified some key determinants to improve the quality of library services such as electronic resources, online catalogue, website, databases, search system, printed collections, respecting user privacy by re-arranging the reading tables and carrels.

Also Hosanain, and Mudhei, (2006) conducted a study based on a questionnaire survey of five major agricultural libraries in Malaysia, it investigated the factors that contribute positively in shaping users' perceptions of library effectiveness. Findings of the study showed that the responses suggest several fruitful avenues for expanding the scope and overall quality of library reference services.

Texas university libraries conducted focus group studies in (2001) with graduate and undergraduate students in order to gather specific information related to their satisfaction with the confidence in the assistance provided at library service points. The sessions revealed that users were generally pleased with assistance provided them by professional staff at reference desks and that they found librarians to be usually patient and helpful although there were some elements of dissatisfaction identified by respondents. The findings of such studies are being used to improve library directional tools and to improve staff training for public service. Crowley and Gilreath (2002).

Looritis and Dubjers (1997) have reported the satisfaction of the users with reference services at TARTU University library. The study proved useful to investigate users' satisfaction with services of reference services. It concluded that library should maintain and strengthen the services with which users are satisfied, and improve those about which they are concerned. The study will be useful to libraries for improvement in their services.

Raji (2006) conducted an appraisal of reference services offered by Quaide- Azam reference library. She mentioned that majority of users were satisfied with reference services but there is need to update the printed reference sources. She furnished various recommendations for further improvement. The reference library should ask if it is meeting its intended goals, objectives and how well the services is helping users fulfill their information needs, if the resources are producing the desired results (Pomerantz, Luo & McClure (2006).

Also Aniebo (2004) opined that reference services is direct personal help given by librarian to a reader who is in need of information for whatever purpose. This is the ability of the reference librarian to translate the query into terms that can be met by reference sources which can be direct or indirect.

Withers (1994) states that library achieves its objectives through reference and bibliographic services, flexible policies concerning loans and distribution of library materials, efficient dissemination of information and other activities and encourage productive use of its resources.

A review of these studies indicates that there are a number of implications for reference services and a survey of user satisfaction. Moreso, the reference library should be concerned with what brings the user to the library. Also note the general attitude of the target audience towards library services, what contribute to their satisfaction, all these will lead to improved reference services by meeting its objectives of satisfying user's needs.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Wyers Attitudinal Theories of Reference Service**

The premier theory of reference service came in 1930 when Wyers examined the various attitudes librarians held while assisting readers in the United States of America. In that study Wyer was using attitudinal traits of librarian of his time to examine the discharge of their duties to library users. He distinguished three attitudinal traits which he classified a conservative, moderate and liberal.

The conservative attitude has to do with librarians that hold the view that library users should be taught how to look for materials themselves. According to Wyer, any assistance to be given in this direction should be minimal.

Moderate attitude, this has to do with librarians that belief that library users should be given reasonable assistance while searching for any information material. The quantum of reasonableness here is guided by the fact that assistance to be offered must be sufficient whether there is user satisfaction or not liberal attitude focuses on the total and unfiltered assistance to users. Here assistance to the fullest for possible attainment of user satisfaction. A cursory appraisal of library services will reveal these classified attitudes and thus can aid library management make appropriate policies from there.

This theory is relevant to this study in the sense that it focuses on librarian's and their innate capabilities in the discharge of their information delivery justices. Also the theory reveal that there were attempts by library scientist at provision of effective reference and information services in libraries for overall attainment of objectives whether institutional and individualistic.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher used the survey methods to sample opinion of library users on satisfaction with reference services. The correlational research design was adopted. The research area is Rivers State Nigeria. The population of the study comprised four thousand user's. One thousand five hundred (1,500) users from university of Port Harcourt, one thousand three hundred (1,300) users from Rivers State university and one thousand two hundred (1,200) users from Ignatius Ajuru university of Education. The simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample, thereby giving equal opportunity for all to be selected. The sample of the study is three hundred and ninety four users.

The instrument used is a (15) item likert type scale questionnaire titled Reference Services and Survey of users Satisfaction of Academic Libraries (RSSUSALQ). It had three parts each with five (5) items on each of the reference services. To determine the reliability of the instrument a pilot study was done in (NDU) Niger Delta University using the split half method. Fifty (50) questionnaires were used for a trial test. The data was analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Coefficient (PPMC) to determine the consistency of the instrument. The correlation of coefficient of 0.83 was obtained making the instrument reliable, consistent and good enough for the study.

Also three hundred and ninety four (394) copies of the instrument was administered and three hundred and fifty (350) copies were retrieved representing 88.8% return rate. The research questions and hypotheses was answered and tested by the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS

**Research Question One:** What is the relationship between personal assistance services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State?

Table 1: correlation results indicating relationship between personal assistance services (PAS) and users' satisfaction level (USI)

Variable	n	$\sum x^2$	$\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	R	Result
PAS	350	41.21	42.57	41.87	0.76	Positive Relationship
USL						

**Key:** PAS—Personal Assistance Services; USL—Users' Satisfaction Level

Data from table 1 shows that the calculated coefficient of 0.76 represents positive correlation. The result therefore affirms existing positive relationship between understudied variable. This implies that librarians personal assistance services to users in academic libraries results to users' satisfaction level.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between search services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State?

**Table 2:** Correlation results indicating relationship between library search service (LSS) and users' satisfaction level (USL)

Variable	n	$\sum x^2$	$\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r	Result
LSS	350	40.76	42.57	41.08	0.86	Positive Relationship
USL						

**Key:** LSS—Librarians Search Services; USL—Users' Satisfaction Level

The computed coefficient of r-value of 0.86 in table 2 indicates positive correlation. The result therefore revealed positive relationship between the understudied variables. Thus, librarians' search services to users in academic libraries make for users' satisfaction level.

**Research Question 3:** What is the relationship between librarians' inter-library loan services and users' level of satisfaction in academic libraries in Rivers State?

Table 3: Correlation results indicating relationship between inter-library loan services (ILLS) and users' satisfaction level (USL)

Variable	n	$\sum x^2$	$\sum y^2$	$\sum xy$	r	Result
LSS	350	40.31	42.57	41.68	0.69	Positive Relationship
USL						

**Key:** ILS—Inter-library Loan Services; USL—Users' Satisfaction Level

In table 3, the calculated coefficient of r-value 0.69 shows positive correlation. The result therefore x-rayed positive relationship between the understudied variables. This revealed that libraries' inter-library loan services to users of academic libraries pave the way for users' satisfaction level.

## Hypotheses

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between personal assistance services and users' satisfaction level in academic libraries in Rivers State.

**Table 4:** Analysis of relationship between personal assistance services and users' satisfaction level in academic libraries in Rivers State

Variables	n	r	r-crit	df	p	z-cal	z-crit	Remark	Decision
PAS	350	0.76	±0.1946	348	0.05	3.11	1.96	Sig.	Rejected
USL									

The data in table 4 shows that the null hypothesis tested at 0.5 level of significance was rejected. This implies that the hypothesis presenting r-value 0.76 and z-cal 3.11 greater than r-crit ±0.1946 and z-crit 1.96 respectively clearly revealed that the subsisting relationship between PAS and USL was significant. This shows that there is a significant relationship between PAS and USL in academic libraries in Rivers State.

**Ho<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between librarians' search services and users' satisfaction levels in academic libraries in Rivers State.

**Table 5:** Analysis of relationship between librarians' search services and users' satisfaction level in academic libraries in Rivers State

Variables	n	r	r-crit	df	p	z-cal	z-crit	Remark	Decision
LSS	350	0.86	±0.1946	348	0.05	2.32	1.96	Sig.	Rejected
USL									

In table 5, the null hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance was rejected. This shows that the hypothesis presenting r-value 0.86 and z-cal 2.32 greater than r-crit ±0.1946 and z-crit 1.96 respectively clearly indicates that the subsisting relationship between LSS and USL was significant. This reveals that there is a significant relationship between LSS and USL in academic libraries in Rivers State.

**Ho<sub>3</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between inter-library loan services and users' satisfaction level in academic libraries in Rivers State.

**Table 6:** analysis of relationship between inter-library loan services and users' satisfaction level in academic libraries in Rivers State

Variables	n	r	r-crit	df	p	z-cal	z-crit	Remark	Decision
ILLS									
USL	350	0.69	±0.1946	348	0.05	1.99	1.96	Sig.	Rejected

The data in table 6 shows that the null hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance was rejected. This implies that the hypothesis presenting re-value 0.69 and z-cal 1.99 greater than r-crit  $\pm 0.1946$  and z-crit 1.96 respectively clearly revealed that the subsisting relationship between ILLS and USL was significant. This implies that there is a significant relationship between ILLS and USL in Academic libraries in Rivers State.

## DISCUSSION

The findings in this study revealed that librarians personal assistance services is a function of users' satisfaction level in academic libraries in Rivers State. This implies that users feel relax and settled down when experienced librarian directly and personally render assistance to academic library users. The test for hypothesis one shows that there is a significant relationship between personal assistance services and users' satisfaction level in academic libraries in Rivers State. In line with the findings, Edem and Mkpufin (2015) asserted that librarians' personal assistance services makes for users' retrieval of useful and rightful information at the right level leading to their satisfaction. It links professional effort of libraries to users with the right information for effective users' satisfaction level. Aniebo (2004) affirmed that satisfaction of the users is high when sourcing and retrieving information are initiated and sustained by librarians' personal assistance services.

The findings equally revealed that librarians' search services enhances users' satisfaction level in academic libraries in Rivers State. This means that academic library users are satisfied when the librarians make the search tools conducive such as a well arranged shelve, current catalogued books, internet services and so on for user's satisfaction level. The test of hypothesis two shows that there is a significant relationship between librarians' search service and users' satisfaction level in academic libraries in Rivers State. This finding synchronizes with the findings of Edem, Ntui and Edama-Agbor (2015) posited that search services as the reference libraries assistance to users makes for users satisfaction level as sourcing tools are available with experienced libraries eager to encourage and intimate users with current information. This has to do with understanding the library's catalogue use and the ability to do effective searching which is crucial to users' success and satisfaction in their use of the library.

The findings in this study also revealed that inter-library loan services is a function of users' satisfaction level in academic libraries in Rivers State. This indicates that the satisfaction of library users' is dependent on the willingness of the librarians to adopt inter-library loan services in the academic libraries. The test of hypothesis three also affirmed that there is a significant relationship between inter-library loan services and users' satisfaction level in academic libraries in Rivers State. In line with this findings, Nwalo (2003) endorsed that:

*lending books to the clients is one of the major functions in the libraries. That is to say the library must go extra-mile to get the information needed by the users even if it is not available in that library just to satisfy the library users.*

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings the research concluded that academic libraries exist and continue to exist to satisfy the users at the level of personal assistance services, librarians' search services as well as engaging in inter-library loan services so as to effectively relieve current and right information for the advancement of users' knowledge and satisfaction.

## Recommendations

The researcher recommended the following:

- Librarians should adopt the personal assistance. Services so as to satisfy the academic library users.
- For users of academic libraries to be satisfied, librarians should effectively engage in search services so as to retrieve current and right information needed by the users.
- As much as possible, librarians should effectively adopt inter-library loan services aimed at getting information needed by the users even if it is not available in that library for users' satisfaction level.
- Librarians should be alive to their statutory duties of assisting the reader to get the necessary information at the right time.
- University authority should fund the libraries so as to get the current books and material needed by the users.

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