AN ASSESSMENT OF USER SATISFACTION WITH SERIAL MATERIALS AND SERVICES IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: A CASE STUDY OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, MINNA

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Abstract:
Information services in the Library should be user centered; there is therefore great need to verify from time to time the rate at which the materials and library services satisfy the user. This study assessed user satisfaction of serial materials and library services rendered in the serial unit of the Federal University of Technology Library, Minna, with the objective to access the suitability of serial materials and the reading environment. Questionnaire was used to collect data and the findings show that students use serial materials more when they are given project topics and for lecturers when they want to carry out one research or the other. At other times the users read mostly newspapers to acquire general knowledge. The study has among others recommended that the issue of poor funding of Nigerian university libraries be revisited so as to take care of current journals and power failure in the libraries.

Introduction

The overwhelming importance of information to the development of any sector cannot be overemphasized. Serials are sources of information (printed and electronic) and they are produced at regular intervals. They include newspapers, minutes of meetings, newsletters, bulletins, government publications, magazines, radio and television programs, tapes, CDs, video tapes, journals(printed or electronic) and other periodicals,(Agbaje,2002). Serials are therefore information carriers and therefore cannot be ignored since education, developments etc is all about information. They consist of a series, they occur in successive parts or numbers. Journals are also serial materials. The factual information that they contain are research findings from various fields of knowledge. They are therefore very useful when conducting research. They contain current and authentic information for special, academic libraries and other research organizations to consult for their research works. This is why institutions devote a lot of their funds to the acquisition and management of the collection.

Generally, the information in all types of serial materials can be useful for research especially information published in journals since such publications are reviewed by experts. Journals are indeed the main means of communication for the exchange of scientific current information than books because information on new processes or scientific discoveries appears in them within weeks and months of their formulation. This is contrary to books which take two to three years before they are published.

Some publications in some serial materials like the journals help researchers to be up to date and well informed of new developments and also help them to avoid duplication. Serials therefore cover various information that result from our daily official interactions, research findings, political, social, economic developments, etc. It is therefore obvious that serial constitute one of the most important information resources of the information Age.

The importance of serial collections therefore cannot be overemphasized considering the necessity attached to information in relation to researches carried out on a daily basis in the universities and by various other bodies and individuals. Serials indeed constitute a considerable part of the materials in the libraries.

As important as these materials are, the extent of their usage depend a lot on how far the user is satisfied with the library services provided, the serial materials available and how suitable the reading environment is. Ifidon and Ifidon (2007), Edoka (2002), Nwalo (1998) and a host of others have emphasized on the effect of library services to the use of library resources. Paietta (1991) specifically stated that the quick and efficient transfer of information request from one point to another, from libraries to their users is the goal of library and information service. In other words libraries and the librarians should endeavor to see that services offered to the user are satisfactory. As Abubakar and Terna (2007), rightly observed, availability of learning resources means ensuring their presence in the library for immediate use and in relation to services rendered. They stated that availability must be differentiated from accessibility. By this, they mean that serial materials might be available and yet not accessible to those who need them. This might be as a result of poor service provided and could result to user frustration.

Studies conducted by Stein (1999) and Nwalo (2003) revealed deficiency in library services rendered in the university libraries and also non-availability of materials in the libraries. To this also some writers like Aina (2004), Edoka (2000) have attributed to poor funding of the university libraries. The relationship of the use of library resources to the suitability of the reading environment can also not be over flogged.

The serials section of the Federal University of Technology Library, Minna might also be experiencing some problems. As it has been observed that there is a dwindling interest in the use of certain serial materials, and the ones consulted are normally done at 'certain periods. However Schleicher and Pemberton (1992) are of the opinion that measuring user satisfaction with library and information services is not really informative since many users have low expectations of library resources and services and will report satisfaction with whatever they think is available. So availability of information resources contributes a lot in increasing the satisfaction of users. Thus, not consulting all the forms of serials available may be a signal that the users are getting demoralized with non availability of certain forms of serial materials or that the services are not satisfying enough or that the reading environment is not conducive enough. This is because most of the times library users have high expectations for collections and services and their perceptions fall short of these expectations.

Literature Review
Osuala (1987) has defined assessment as the task of making judgement of the worth or value of a total program........., the determination of the extent to which previously establishing goals and objectives are being or have been obtained.

However, Gojeh (2004) stated that the assessment of a library tool involves finding out the level of user motivation and satisfaction of their information needs with library and information services provision or otherwise placing value judgment on, observing, grading or awarding performance marks for the purpose of assessment carried out.

While Anaehobi, (2001) looked at assessment in line with library collections meeting users objectives. For it is how well the available collections are meeting the needs of the users, and if it is not sufficient, in which way are those collections deficient?

In whatever way it is looked at or defined, assessment simply put is like stock taking whereby library performance or services rendered to users are evaluated in relation to laid down objectives of the library. Thereafter, adjustments plus or minus are made as to achieve results and for the library organization that is user centred, the expected result is that of making sure that users are satisfied in relation to services rendered and resources available. In support of this Spiller (1999) is of the view that library services should be assessed to ensure that users are getting the services that they need. This should be done by measuring the impact of the services provided in the libraries, measuring also the extent of the motivation and satisfaction of the users.

In their own contribution Suracevic and Kantor (1997) as cited by Gojeh (2004) in the findings of the study carried out on this, stated that the time spent in trying to satisfy students needs should be minimized. For Udensi (1998), the issue of staff training and retraining should be taken seriously in the library for services rendered to users in the library to improve. Users satisfaction has of late been acknowledged as the ultimate measure of library services and resource availability in the library. Doyle (1995) conducted a study to measure users perceptions of and services satisfaction with the quality of service in an academic library. The findings include deficiencies in the services rendered to library users. Oppenhiem and Walker (1996) investigated user satisfaction and the potential for development of library services in BBC Scotland information research library. Their findings however proved that the users were satisfied with the library services rendered by the library staff which is quite exiting.

On the use and availability of information resources like the serial materials, Doyle (1995) also indentified the services rendered at the circulation desk and lack of adequate training of staff in ICT information handling tools as some of the problems hindering the use of information sources in university libraries. On the extent of use of information sources in the library, Okore (1998) indentified that lack of availability and accessibility of information sources in the library are the fundamental problems associated with the use of library materials and the serial materials are not exception. While Muyanyi (2000) added that lack of proper infrastructure, funds, managerial skills and lack of ICT equipments also inhibit the use of information sources in the university libraries in Nigeria.

The reading environment also influences to a great deal the user on the use of the information resources in the library. To this the theory of McClelland (1962) is the view that peoples' needs and the way they behave towards these needs are largely influenced by the environment. If the reading environment in the serial or in any section of the library (comfortable reading chairs, fans or air conditioners, relaxation corners, conveniences etc) is not conducive, this might affect the use of materials in the serial section.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:
1.   Assess the extent of serial resources available in Federal University of Technology library, Minna.

2.　　Determine the suitability of reading environment in the serial section of Federal University of Technology library, Minna.

3.　　Identify problems encountered by users in the use of serials materials in Federal University of Technology library, Minna.

4.　　Identify the serial that is most frequently used in Federal University Technology library, Minna.

Research Questions

This study will provide answers o the following research questions:

1.　　What types of serial materials are available in the serial section of the FUT library Minna?

2.　　What serial materials are frequently used by users?

3.　　How relevant are the serial materials provided to the information needs of users?

4.　　What problems are encountered by users in the use of serial materials in FUT, library?

5.　　How suitable is the reading environment in the serial section of FUT, library?

Methodology

This is a case study of the rate which serial materials accessed by students using the Federal university of Technology library, Minna.

The population of the study comprised of FUT students, lecturers and other library users who used serial materials for the 2007/2008 session.

The total population of registered users of serials as at 2007\2008 session was 500 and 150 out of the total population were randomly selected and administered questionnaire and the 150 were all collected. Frequency count and percentage were used to analyse the data collected.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: Adequacy of serial materials

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very adequate	49	33
Fairly adequate	80	53
Not adequate	21	14
Total	150	100

Table 1 shows responses of serial users to the adequacy of serial materials. As shown, the fairly adequate had the highest rating of 53%, followed by very adequate which had a rating of 33%, and not adequate had the lowest rating of 14%.

This findings show that the quantity of serial materials that are available is not very satisfactory, this could also be related to lack of current serial materials, which is the case with FUT serials. Even the 14% that indicated outright inadequacy of serial materials cannot be ignored.

Table 2: Conducive of reading environment

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very conducive	27	18
Conducive	60	40
Fairly conducive	48	32
Not conducive	15	10
Total	150	100

Table 2 clearly brings out 'conducive' as having the highest rating of 40%, followed by 'fairly conducive' rating 32%, followed by very conducive with a rating of 18% and 10% for Not conducive'.

This depicts that the reading environment in the serial section of FUT library is not bad, and therefore has not contributed much in user frustrations in that section. However the 10% rating of the 'Not conducive' should not be ignored.

Table 3: Problems encountered in use of serial materials

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Poor assistance	14	3
Materials not well organized	17	11
Some material not available	63	42
Power failure	40	27
No problem	26	17
Total	150	100

As can be seen in table 3, poor assistance has the least contribution to the problem of poor utilization of serial materials with a record of just 3% while 'some materials are not available' has the highest rating of 42%, followed by 'power failure' which rates 27%, followed by 'materials not well organized' with a rating of 17% and 'no problem' with a rating of 11%.

These findings show that one of the problems that frustrate users in the serial section of FUT library is the fact that some forms of serial materials are not available in the serial section, this is followed by the epileptic nature of electricity supply in Nigeria. The findings also show that some of the materials in the serial section are sometimes not well organized. This can be very frustrating to users especially if they cannot locate materials.

Table 4: Staff assistance in serial unit

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	33	22
Very good	29	19
Good	59	39
Fair	18	12
Poor	11	18
Total	150	100

'Good' has the highest rating of 39% followed by 'excellent' with a rating of 22, followed by 'very good' with 19%, 'Fair' 12% and 'poor' with 8%.

This shows that staff of the serial section in FUT library assists users in the location of serial materials but what about the 18% low rating in 'poor' and the 12% rating in 'fair'. These no doubt contribute to poor satisfaction of the users in terms of services rendered and therefore a drop in use of serial materials in that section.

Table 5: Location of serial materials

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Previous knowledge	32	21
Library staff assistance	91	61
Kadex	13	9
Friends	14	9
Total	150	100

This shows that 'Library staff assistance' has the highest rating of 61%, followed by 'Previous knowledge' with a rating of 21%, 'Kadex' 9% and 'Friends' 9%.

This is a further prove that the serial staff in FUT library with the highest rating of 61% make positive contributions in assisting users in the use of serial materials. The gap between the rating of library staff (61%) and that of previous knowledge (22%) is wide enough to confirm that students need to be equipped with skills on how to locate information in the library in general and the serial section in particular. The difficulty encountered by students in being able to locate information by themselves is one of the causes of user frustrations in the location and use of serial materials in FUT library.

Table 6: Types of serial frequently consulted

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Journal	26	17
Newspapers	35	23
Magazines	17	12
Projects	72	48
Total	150	100

'Projects' have the highest rating of 48% followed by 'Newspapers' with a rating of 23%, then 'Journals' 17% and 'Magazines' 12%.

This brings out one of the problems that serials materials are facing – that of under use by students. As can be deduced by the highest rating of 48% in projects, students use projects more than other serial materials and they do this mostly when they are given project topics, most other times they read newspapers, journals and magazines are seldom used. This is also indicative of lack of satisfaction or frustration in consultation of other groups of serial materials. It could also be seen as lack of information location skills, therefore a fall back on the use of projects.

Table 7: Reasons of serial consultations

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
When reading for pleasure	10	7
For general knowledge	74	49
When conducting a research	56	37
When preparing for exams	10	7
Total	150	100

The highest rating in table 7 above on serial is consulted mostly 'For general knowledge' which is 49%, followed by 'When conducting a research' which is 37%, 'when preparing for examination' is as low as 7%.

This finding shows that students only use the serial section mostly when given research topics and personal experience is a further prove that most of them request for project so as to copy (plagiarize), or mutilate previous studies, other periods, they read newspapers most of the times for general knowledge as indicated in the table.

Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is deduced that the rate at which students use serial materials in the FUT library is based on how satisfied they are with the services rendered to them and the availability of the serial materials. Another factor that affects user satisfaction is lack of information sourcing or location skills. Despite the fact that these things are taught in user education programme in FUT, but student do not take this serious and therefore acquire little of these information skills. The high concentration on the use of projects in the serial section brings out this lack, because most of the time students want to copy information in the project but spend little effort in consulting other sources of serial materials.

The ratings on adequacy of library material (53%) on 'Fairly adequate' is a prove that, most of the materials in serial section are not even current, and the different forms are not available. All these will surely lead to user frustration.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion drawn from the study, the following recommendations are made:
1. The issue of poor funding of Nigerian university libraries should be revisited by the appropriate authorities so as to enable the library to buy currents journals, and other forms of serials materials.
2. The library should give more thought to the issue of buying a generator dedicated to the library so that the issue of power failure should not be a contributor to user frustrations and therefore poor library services in the use of serial materials.
3. The serial collections should be enlarged to include all other forms of serials like radio and television programmes, tapes, CD, video tapes, current journals etc. This will boost the enthusiasm of users more.

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