

Import of User Education in Academic Libraries in Nigeria: The Federal University Oye-Ekiti Example

Isaac Oluwadare Busayo*

*Principal Librarian, FUYOYE Library, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria, E-mails: iobusayo@yahoo.com / Isaac.busayo@fuoye.edu.ng

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Abstract

Thousands of candidates seeking admission to tertiary institutions in Nigeria, particularly, those seeking admission to the universities are school certificate holders, fresh from the various secondary schools with little or no knowledge of how the university system operates. Thus, such candidates when eventually admitted into the university needs to be acquainted with the university norms, custom and culture; particularly, the library and its holdings hence, the need for user education in academic libraries. When users are introduced to the library and its resources early enough, particularly the Federal University, Oye-Ekiti that is just in its 200level, the possibility of misuse or abuse or damage of materials would be minimized to the barest minimum if not completely eradicated. Therefore, when library materials are judiciously used and jealously guided, such materials would last long and stand the test of time, serving both the present set of students and those who would be admitted in the nearest future. User education in libraries, particularly in academic libraries no doubt, remains a panacea for the longevity of library resources.

Keywords: User education, Academic libraries, Federal university, Nigeria

Introduction

Students of Nigerian higher education, particularly, the academic libraries, are being inducted to explore the library and information service in different ways so that they can be in a comfortable position to consult their required sources of information easily and conveniently. Now-a-days, students' community of institutions of higher learning face difficulties in retrieving

pertinent information because of their poor library use education, thus leading to a state of less use of information sources and poor appreciation of library management. In this context, it is very crucial to impart user education programmes for the patrons of academic libraries. When users are not properly educated on the use of resources, there is the likelihood

for such resources to be abused or misused due to the ignorance on the part of the users or under the guise/pretense that they were not informed or that they do not know.

Ogunmodede et al (2011) opined that the user is the hub of any library around whom all the processes of library revolve. Thus, users must be always invited to give their feedbacks on the service provisions of their respective libraries. The academic libraries should provide user orientation and user education to train them to explore library and information resources efficiently which could be instrumental in increasing their knowledge (Aina, 2004). In this regard Fjallbrant, (1990) opines that, "the objective of user education is to acquaint users with the use of materials in the libraries and the teaching of those skills enable students to locate and use materials effectively, and feel confident in using the library". Fleming (1990) argues its inclusion in academic libraries to maximize the rate of usage. Bello (2003) viewed that it is an effective tool for the librarian to train them on how to use library resources. Osagie (2003) identified *four* imports of this programme namely:

- to train the users to search the library materials through library catalogues by author, title and subject ,
- to impart the users necessary trainings regarding the use of classification schemes,
- to make the user competent in retrieval of audio visual materials, and
- to help them explore library resources as a repository of knowledge supporting their academic curriculum.

Brief on Federal University, Oye-Ekiti

The Federal University Oye-Ekiti was one of the nine universities established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2011, pursuant to an executive order made by the President of

the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, to make affordable university education accessible to the people. Thus, in a bid to ensure the actualization of the vision setting up the Federal University Oye-Ekiti, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Visitor to the university approved the constitution of a Management Team for the university - in consultation with the Federal Ministry of Education and the Nigerian Universities Commission (Adeghoje, 2013).

The Federal University Oye-Ekiti is relatively young, as it commenced operation in the month of February, 2011. The student population is still few and in their two hundred (200) level. The need, therefore, to 'catch these students young' by introducing them to user education in academic library cannot be overemphasized. The University commenced academic activities at its two campuses situated in Oye-Ekiti (for courses in Humanities, Social Sciences and Sciences) and Ikole-Ekiti (for courses in Agricultural Technology and Engineering) with effect from 2011/2012 academic session. The pioneer Vice-Chancellor Professor Chinedu Ositadinma Nebo took proactive measure to ensure that the institution took off as scheduled. The relative speed with which the university's permanent site in Oye-Ekiti and the second campus in Ikole-Ekiti were developed speaks volumes. Thus, within six months, lecture theatres, laboratories, workshop studios, recruitment of academic and non-academic staff as well as admission of students was completed.

The incumbent Vice-Chancellor, Professor Isaac Uzoma Asuzu in his maiden address to the university community reminded the students that the university (FUOYE) like other responsible organizations is governed by rules and regulations. He opined that the rules and regulations are to guide their conduct in the university just as the Student Information

Handbook equally serves as a guide and also contains all the information that a student needs to know about the university. He stressed that the rules are not just mere cosmetic designs, but that they are meant to be obeyed and that there are sanctions for violating them with a view to enforcing discipline in the system.

Literature review

The instruction in the library use or library user education plays the most crucial role to enhance quantitative and qualitative use of libraries. Thus, its genesis can be said to be as old as when librarianship started, more than a century before when Harvard College started its user education programs somewhere in the early nineteenth century as it is assumed. However, Adio (2006) points out that the genesis of user education really started somewhere in 1960s when the concept of academic library was introduced for the first time and this view confirms the stance of Akande (2002).

“The goals and objectives for programmes of University library user education must be in agreement with the general aim of the library, the aims which must in turn, be related to the goals and aims of higher education”. Apart from the fact that students’ can be introduced/taught library use education during the teaching of the use of library on admission, the first point of contact/forum where this can also be mentioned to students is during their orientation programme (Fjallbrant and Stevenson, 1978).

Asuzu (2013) knew the import of orientation when in his address to freshmen said, “I have no doubt that you have been greatly informed and enriched by the orientation period. Endeavour to live by all you learnt throughout the programme. During the orientation, you were informed that the university has a dress code that must be complied with as long as you want to stay in the university. I urge you to adhere to the dress code to avoid embarrassment because anyone

found guilty will be sent out of the university, no matter how highly placed the parents may be. Note the slogan -Dress the way you want to be addressed”. He equally stressed that the Federal University Oye-Ekiti will award its degrees to those found worthy in character and learning.

So many scholars in the field of library and information studies have at one time or the other come-up with one scholarly write-up or the other on user education in libraries using various terms interchangeably to convey the message of user education playing the vital role in effective use of library and information resources. Some of the synonymous terms are: “library use education”, “reader instruction”, “user instruction”, “library orientation” and “library user education”

The aforementioned terms directly indicates towards the organized programmes conducted by different kinds of libraries, more emphatically in academic libraries to help library users acquire necessary skills in using the library and information resources conveniently (Lwehabura, 1999).

Academic libraries and its services to users

The Libraries being the service institutions should provide bibliographical tools and means of access to information resources meeting the exact needs of the users’ community (Oyewumi, 2006). The level of materials depending upon the nature of their scholarship should be meticulously organized and classified (Fayose, 2000). Most importantly, teaching and research materials should be identified in their respective lots so that they can meet the requirements of curricular needs and research needs differently. The forms of materials like text books, conference proceedings, journals, and audio-visual materials should find their respective places in a well organized manner. More importantly, personal assistance must be constantly rendered to the users as it forms the back bone of library services.

Moreover, academic libraries are those libraries attached to tertiary institutions of the status of a university, polytechnic, college of education and the like. Some of the notable services rendered by academic libraries are as follows:

Lending services

The Circulation section of the library is the most focal point of library transactions with the users as it is exclusively intended for issue and return of books. This service is only provided to the registered users of the library like the students, lecturers, research scholars and others that may be permitted by the library authority.

Inter-library loan

No single library in the world can understandably meet all the needs of its users, regardless of the size and stock of such a library. Therefore, in order to meet the students demand for certain book or article or any other information resource, the concerned librarian obtains such materials from other libraries on agreement to return the same after its use which is called inter library loan.

Referral services

If situation demands, a certain user could be advised to explore the services of other libraries having sufficient information infrastructure to cater to his academic or research needs never mind if it is a public, special or academic library. This kind of service is called referral service as it is done in case of a physician advising his patients to be shifted to a big hospital. In this case, a reader needs a letter of recommendation from his parent library manager.

In addition to the above mentioned services, an academic library offers some other different services like, "reservation services", "current awareness services", "selective dissemination of information", photocopying services", "translation services" among others that the users of a given library must be

acquainted with through user education programmes.

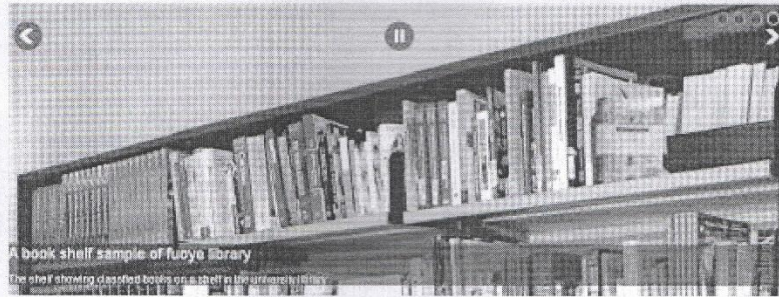
Contextually, Adio (2006) identified the following key objectives of user education in libraries of higher institutions:

- To add to the targets and goals of the institution with respect to high quality standard with regards to teaching, learning and research;
- To organize the information resources scientifically so that it encourages the readers to browse and read materials with effortless ease;
- To apply and implement new services and apprise the users about the addition;
- To apprise the users with all sources of national and international information resources available in the library.

Experience with Federal University, Oye-Ekiti library

The Federal University Oye-Ekiti Library serves students, teaching and non-teaching staff members constituting a total of over two thousand users. In addition to a very good collection of books, the library subscribes to several online databases namely, HINARI, AGORA, OARE, and others. We always emphasize on the proper classification, cataloguing and user centric current awareness services and the basics of information seeking. Besides, the library offers essential library services like Lending (Book loan) services, On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) services, induction programme on the use of library, students' orientation at periodical intervals, virtual library services, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information (SDI) services, reference services and an array of such other important services as the need arise.

Isaac Oluwadare Busayo



Source: <http://library.fuoye.edu.ng/>

Figure 1. Snap shot of the library book shelf

Since the very day I joined this university, I have had the passion to train the users' community to explore the resources of the university library through different series of users' orientation programme. Fortunately, I am optimistic that this laudable goal would work because the university authorities are not against the inclusion of a user orientation programme to the freshers so that they can use the library without facing any problem. However, I still feel that we might strengthen the idea further to increase the rate of usage of library materials. We are on the way to find out some feasible solutions to work it out seriously sooner or later.

Recommendations

Library use education or user education is of considerable importance in academic libraries bearing in mind the various services rendered coupled with the resources available for use in such libraries. It is therefore suggested/recommended that academic libraries that do not teach or introduce freshmen (new students) on admission, to the use of library should endeavour to do so without further delay while those who do so should sustain it for the following reasons:

- Most of the newly admitted students to this university are fresh from their respective secondary schools and are

seeing such facilities for the first time, thus they need to be comprehensively orientated.

- Library books are expensive and most of them are even imported, therefore there is need for guidance to guide against abuse, in this way use education can be proved handy.
- The care of books must be well taught to guide against theft, mutilation, pilfering and even defacing of books.
- On-line Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), which is one of the services provided in academic libraries is technical and cannot be operated by novices without due exposure of the students to such use.
- Computer and other electronic devices used for one operation or the other in academic libraries are fragile and needs proper care/handling by users.
- The use of library catalogue manually for the retrieval of books must be taught; else, users might remove cards from the catalogue drawer and disorganize the arrangement.

- Loan policy, inter-library loan, referral services etc must be taught for compliance.
- Knowledge is dynamic and there is the need to expose users to all changes that must have taken place in the library for information and compliance.

The library is governed by rules and regulations which users must be intimately informed/taught for enlightenment and compliance as users' ignorance of these would be detrimental to the system.

Conclusion

Teaching the use of library or introducing newly admitted students (fresher) to library use education will help to ensure that the library resources are treasured by users and thus help to prolong the life span of the materials. Hence, the library doesn't need to replace its materials as a result of abuse, misuse or damage; likewise, the 'slim library annual budget' would be spent on some other meaningful ventures within the library. Therefore, for the enlightenment of users, for the good of the system and for the longevity of library resources, user library education should be encouraged, stressed and taught both during students' orientation and when teaching the use of library to undergraduates.

Local, State and Federal Government in Nigeria should ensure and endeavour to see that the various schools and at all levels have functional libraries to catch our youths' young. If students are introduced to the use of library right from their Nursery /Primary and Secondary school days, it would be easier for them to grab the advance skills of handling complex set of information at top.

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