REFERENCE SERVICE DELIVERY AND USERS' SATISFACTION IN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study examined reference service delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. One objective, one research question and one hypothesis guided the study. Data for the study were obtained through questionnaire captioned ISDUSQ administered on 1,760 respondents which represented 10% of the entire population. The questionnaire was content and face validated. Pearson Product Moment Coefficient was adopted as the analytical tool for the study. The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate accepted. The findings revealed that there exist a significant relationship between reference services delivery and users' satisfaction in Federal University Libraries in South-South Nigeria. The findings further revealed that users were satisfied with the reference services. From the findings of the study it was concluded that satisfaction with reference service depends on its delivery and adequate delivery of information service enhances satisfaction. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended among others that more effort and finances should be made by the parent institutions of these academic libraries in maintaining or superseding the current delivery of reference service in their libraries as this is what users' desire in their libraries.*

KEY WORDS: reference, services delivery, users, satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

The library plays a key role in delivering learning resources to students and staff of the university. The university library is a well-known service-oriented organization with its primary aims centering round the provision of information services and resources. The library provides vital and essential information sources, facilities and services to students, lecturers, scholars and professionals. It may be referred to as the heart of any institution where it is found and it owns the duties of providing necessary information services to aid the attainment of academic and other purposes of the university.

Libraries are said to be an indispensable treasures for the acquisition of knowledge as they acquire and organize print, non-print and electronic information resources for utilization by their users (Usoro and Okon, 2012). Much is expected from the university libraries, and they are therefore expected to strive to provide users with satisfactory information services to justify their existence in terms of meeting users' needs. Ifidon (2006) pointed out that the academic library is an indispensable part of any educational organization; as a repository of knowledge, it is meant to provide information services that will meet the needs of the university community, which will eventually enhance learning and research. The author further stated that these libraries have been set up to provide materials and services, which will now and in the future best contribute to the

fulfillment of the objectives of the institution. Thus the library becomes an integral part of the university in manpower development. Akintunde (2006) opined that librarianship has continued to hold a central place in higher education worldwide and has remained the strength of the best traditions in academics worldwide.

For university libraries, satisfactory service applies to three general areas, each of which consists of assorted variables, resources, information content, organization, service environment and resources delivery, and service delivered by staff (Hernon, Ntecki and Akintunde, 2003). The success of a university library therefore depends on the services it offers. Effective and high service delivery will successfully support the academic goals of any tertiary institution. This will enhance users' utilization and satisfaction.

Reference service delivery is essential for meaningful research in South-South Nigeria, but how can this be demonstrated? How tangible is the linkage between reference service delivery and the satisfaction of library users for high research and productivity output? The limited status accorded to information service delivery in South-South Nigeria suggests that its potential value is not self-evident. Evidence from research also indicates user's frustration, low patronage of reference service/products, dearth of trained librarian, lack of modern tools for service delivery as some of the factors affecting reference service delivery in South-South, Nigeria.

Many libraries especially the university libraries are focusing on evaluation of the users' needs and their satisfaction with services. User survey will provide useful perceptions of service delivery in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. It is against this background that this study seeks to determine the relationship between reference service delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem
Delivery of satisfactory reference service is one tactful and demanding function of libraries especially in recent time. This arises from information explosion and the advent of information technology which have led to a challenge in determining the needed services that satisfy the library users.However, a preliminary visit by the researchers to some university libraries revealed that there is inadequacy in reference service delivery. These service in some of these libraries are not readily delivered and even when available, delivery becomes a problem. These calls for concern because of the adverse effect it will have on the academic programmes of the users, as the university library is established to deliver services to enable the institution achieve excellence in the performance of its functions of research, teaching and learning. This is in line with Lawal (2010) which states that the quality of information service provided in academic libraries directly affects the quality of academic programmes in the institutions.

Furthermore, observation by the researchers revealed that to some extent there is difficulty of library users in accessing and efficiently utilising reference service. This may be due to non-friendliness and adequate collection and knowledge skills of some librarians that could hamper their provision of answers to users query. Moreover, the university enrolment of students over the years has led to population explosion and the fact that the university library serves the entire

community, hence, the service have become grossly inadequate. It therefore means that the demand for reference service may outstrip the supply. The problem here is the scrambling for the limited services by the large number of library users. And this causes users frustration and dissatisfaction with service delivery. This is in the confirmation with a research by Osigwe (2007) which indicates user's frustration, low patronage of library services/products, inadequately trained librarians and lack of modern tools for service delivery as some of the factors affecting reference service delivery.

On the other hand, users especially new students are usually frightened and amazed by the volumes of services in the library to the extent that they are confused about how to access their desired services. Also some users lack the knowledge and are ignorant of the different ways through which the library delivers reference service. This hampers their optimum usage of service to their satisfaction.

The researchers assume that these phenomena stated above actually influence the users' satisfaction with reference service in federal university libraries in south-south Nigeria. It therefore became pertinent to ask, are users satisfied with reference service in federal university libraries in south-south Nigeria? Thus, this study was an attempt at finding plausible answers to this question.

Purpose of the Study
The general purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between reference service delivery and users' satisfaction.
 The specific objective of this study was to:
1.   Examine the relationship between reference services delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions
Research questions were framed to guide this study:
1.   What is the relationship between reference service delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria
Null Hypotheses
Based on research question, research hypothesis was formulated and tested.
1.   There is no significant relationship between reference service delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The delivering of reference service has been, and still is, at the heart of all libraries, be it academic, public or special. Until the internet changed forever the way we access information, it was the exclusive preserve of the reference librarian to deliver information directly to the client (Weddell 2008). A close examination of a reference service provides library administration and involved librarians with a clear understanding of how well the services is meeting its intended goals, objectives, outcome, how well the services is helping users fulfill their information needs, and

whether the expended services are producing the desire results (Pomerantz, Luo and McClure,2006).

The reference department is one of the major areas of the library where contact is made with the users. Staff of the reference department is image makers of the library. They are required to be very polite to university library users while at the same time not being servile. Users are discouraged from visiting the library if staffs are rude and unfriendly.

As noted by Nwalo (2003) reference department houses reference materials which are for in-library use only. Further pointed that, the reference department stores reference materials and provides space where users can conveniently sit and consult the often voluminous materials. Reference materials contain facts that have been assembled from many sources and organized for each quick access and use. Unlike the general textbook, reference books are consulted for specific items of information. They are not supposed to be read from cover to cover. Information contained in reference books is organized in such a way that retrieval is made easy. The arrangement may be chronological or alphabetical, depending on the nature of the material. Yearbooks, for example, are suitable for chronological arrangement while dictionaries and encyclopedias are more amendable to alphabetical arrangement.

Reference service offered by university libraries include; answering reference queries, user education, compilation of reading lists, compilation of bibliographies, indexing and abstracted, inter-library loan services and current awareness services. Answering users' query; the primary function of a reference department of any library is answering user query. Chairs are provided for the users to sit and discuss with the reference librarian in his/her office. Not more than two users may be allowed into the librarian's office at a time unless they have a common problem. There are two kinds of reference queries-Quick reference query and research query. A quick reference query as the name suggests refers to a situation where the request needs an instant answer. A users, for example may simply wait to know when President Ibrahim Babangida came to power. Even where the reference libraries know the answer, it is good practice to answer the question professionally so as to avoid doubts. In answering the question, the reference librarian is likely to consult the Nigerian Year Book (Published annually). Consulting the book and answering the question before the user would make the answer very authentic. The student needs to be convinced that he/she is given the right answer. A research query needs a longer time to answer than a quick reference query. A typical research query is the demand by a library user to know who out of all the American presidents was the youngest at the time he was elected into office. A question such as this cannot possibly be given an instant answer unless it has been previously answered and recorded in the reference query file. When any student asks a research question, he/she is asked to come to the answer at a given time either on the same day or another day. The reference librarian in this situation might consult who is who the United States and who was who in the United States. It may take some time to answer the question but the librarian should persevere and take delight in finding the answer. If the answer has been found, it is given to the student when he/she conies. Nevertheless, where an answer has not been found at the time the user calls, politely explain to the user and give him/her another appointment where applicable.

A good reference librarian should master the reference tools in the library. He should be patients, non abrasive, polite and needs to have empathy. Furthermore, he should readily get out of his office to direct the users to the shelves and even assist them locate materials which they need to consult to satisfy their information needs. Staff of the reference department needs to regularly teach users how to make effective use of the library catalogue. They also need to teach the users how to make use of specialized reference materials like the science citation index (Sd). Users also need to be educated on how to handle books and the need to obey library rules and regulations. All these are of the reference services which in constant touch with users in academic libraries. Compilation of Bibliographies reference department constantly compiles bibliographies for us by the users. The bibliographic are often subject based. Since a good member of users may not easily have access to other libraries it is advisable to compile bibliographies based on what users can easily find. A list of available bibliographies should be made and published for the attention of users.

Indexing and abstracting; indexing entails the systematic listing of the essential contents of a document for the purpose of speedy information retrieval (Nwalo 2003). As part of reference services, academic libraries compiles indexes on important materials for which no index was provided at the time of publication. All indexes compiled could be kept in appropriately labeled files. Users are made aware of the existence of index files so that they can use them along with the library materials. Academic libraries also makes abstracts of important documents and let users know of their existence in the library as part of reference services which is beeii offered to them. Nwalo (2003) stressed that, abstracting involves the summarization of the essential contents of documents. Abstract facilities information retrieval as the reader can determine whether or not the original document will meet his/her information need after reading the abstract.

Despite the processing and propagation of library resources, a key trait of a university library is the services based around personal interaction between users and library staff Libraries should make sure that these services show proper levels of customer care and that the information given to the users is useful and at the right level Retting (2012) pointed out that the distinguishing features of reference include a staff designated to provide the service; a co1lection of reference works accessible to the users in an area set aside for the delivery of service; adequate guides to the library's resources; and a high degree of interaction between the staff and the user. Although in today's world the term reference service encompasses more activities then mentioned by Retting. In this context Mitchell (2008) has rightly said that today's reference librarians are actively engaged with the many emerging new processes by which learning occurs. Further, reference librarians in academic libraries are actively engaged with the many emerging new processes not only by which learning occurs, but also by which research is done.

Publication of list of new arrivals for this activity, academic libraries prepares a list of the most recently acquired monographic publications and widely circulates it to students. The list is alphabetical by the main access point. Academic libraries display and publicity are also aspects of current awareness services. Current awareness services are provided to ensure maximum exposure and utilisation of the library's information resources. Current awareness services; it is part of the services provided by academic libraries as part of reference service whose responsibility is to provide arrant selective dissemination of information (SD!), publication of current contents, and

the publication of a list of new arrivals. Inter library loan service; arrangement of inter library loans is one of the important functions academic library. Hardly can any library meet all the information needs of her clientele (Ekekwe and Muokebe 2012). Most World libraries at present engage in knowledge management that is the ways information resources are arranged and organised for easy, retrieval and utilization by the users.

Data Gathering Method and Analysis

one research question and one hypotheses was formulated to guide the study.. The study adopted survey design while purposive sampling technique was employed. Instrument for gather data was a structured questionnaire captioned ISDUSQ. The instrument was validated by three experts, all from faculty of education, University of Uyo. The questionnaires were administered to the library users met at the spot using the library after presenting letter of introduction to the university librarian.

Table I: Distribution Sampling

Institutions	Population	Sample Size
University of Benin	5,011	501
University of Port Harcourt	4,918	492
University of Uyo	4,337	434
University of Calabar	3,333	333
Total	**17,599**	**1,760**

The questionnaires were administered by the researchers. The researchers collaborated with research assistants, who were students in the institutions under study, to administer and collect the research instrument. The researchers took time to educate the research assistants on how to obtain information and administer the questionnaire. The researcher and research assistants administered the instrument one on one to the respondents. One thousand seven hundred and sixty (1,760) questionnaires were administered. One thousand seven hundred and thirty six (1,736) were retrieved while twenty four (24) were not retrieved. The data collected from the respondents were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Statistical tool. All the tests were carried out at .05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Null Hypothesis 1
There is no significant relationship between reference service delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 2:   Correlation Analysis between Reference Services Delivery and Users' Satisfaction in Federal University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

Variables	N	$\sum X$ $\sum Y$	$\sum X^2$ $\sum Y^2$	$\sum XY$	r_{cal}	r_{cri}
Reference Services Delivery	1736	25053	374063	337606	.531*	.062
Users' Satisfaction	1736	22888	316890			

*= significant at .05 level of significance.

As shown in table 2, calculated r value (.531) is greater than the critical r value (.062). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there exist significant relationship between reference services delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from the result on the relationship between reference service delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria revealed a significant relationship between reference services delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries. This significant relationship may be attributed to the politeness, non abrasiveness and patience of the staffs at the reference sections of the libraries and the provision of adequate reference materials with convenient sits for users. It may also be as a result of the organisation of reference books that resulted to easy retrieval of information by users, the regular teaching of users on how to make effective use of the library catalogue, handle books and obeying library rules and regulations. This is why Retting (2012) stressed that the distinguishing features of reference include staff designation to provide service, adequate guide to library resources and a high degree of interaction between staff and users. The study is also in line with Uganneya, Ape and Ugbagir (2012) who investigated information services provision and user satisfaction in agricultural research libraries in Nigeria and found that majority of the users were satisfied with both the reference and circulation services provision by the agricultural research libraries.

Summary of the Study
The findings of the showed revealed that:
1.   There exists a significant relationship between reference services delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to determine the relationship between reference service delivery and users' satisfaction in federal university libraries

The findings concluded that there exist significant relationship reference service delivery and users' satisfaction in Federal University Libraries in South-South Nigeria. The findings also conclude that the reference services were readily delived and as such satisfy the library users. Adequate delivery of reference service enhances satisfaction

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the recommends:

Reference librarians should ensure that they interact extensively to find out the actual information needs of users. They should be friendly to the library users to enhance effective interaction.

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