Advocacy, Conducive Environment and Students' Patronage of Library Information Services in Tertiary Institutions in University of Port Harcourt, Rivers State

Hilda Eno Obi (PhD, CLN)
Department of Library and Information Science
Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt

ABSTRACT: *This study was conducted to investigate the effect of advocacy and conducive environment on students' patronage of information services in public tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria. Ex-post facto research design was used for the study. The population of the study was all the 12739 registered undergraduate library users in public tertiary institutions in Rivers State for the 202/2022 academic session. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to select a sample of 790 students for the study. A researcher developed questionnaire named "Advocacy, Conducive Environment and Students' Patronage of Information Services Questionnaire" (ACESPISQ) was used in collecting data for the study. The instrument was face validated by three experts. Cronbach Alpha was used to determine the reliability of the instrument and a coefficient of .86 was obtained. Mean was used to answer the research questions while independent t-test was used to test the hypotheses of the study. The findings of the study indicated that there is significant influence of advocacy and conducive environment on students' patronage of information services in public tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria. It was recommended among others that librarians need to constantly sensitize their students and staff of their institutions about the information services the library renders which can aid in satisfying their information needs.*

KEYWORDS*:* advocacy, conducive environment, students' patronage, library information services, tertiary institutions, University of Port-Harcourt, Rivers State

INTRODUCTION

Information is vital for all our activities. Many people need information for study, research, for pursuing their careers, health care, problem solving, while others may need information for recreation and lifelong learning. Everybody needs information for some purpose or the other. For example, students need information to supplement their textbook studies and for project work. Teachers need information for teaching and research. Professionals (doctors, engineers, consultants, etc.) need information to pursue their careers efficiently. Planners and policy makers need information to frame policies and take correct decisions. Researchers need information to keep up to date in their areas of research, to find out new areas of research and

to solve any research problem. It is therefore interesting to know that depending on the capacity of the library, the library can satisfy the information needs of these individuals.

The library is a collection of materials, books or media that are accessible for use and not just for display purposes. A library provides physical or digital access materials, and may be a physical location or a virtual space, or both. A library's collection can include printed materials, and other physical resources in many formats such as DVD, CD and cassette as well as access to information, music or other content held on bibliographic databases (Obi, 2023).

Libraries, since ages, have stored materials that enable ideas, knowledge and experiences to be passed on from generation to generation. Libraries build collections tailored to the needs and goals of the organizations they serve. For example, academic libraries, build collections for students, teachers and researchers. This collection is systematically organized by the library for use by the users. The library collection serves as an important resource in education, work, and recreation of millions of people. However, for libraries and information services to stay viable in the current climate, it is important that they adopt marketing strategies to help meet organizational mission, goals and objectives. Marketing has long been associated with the selling of a product in order to make a profit, but was extended to the non-profit sector including libraries (Enache, 2008). In this study, two marketing indicators, advocacy and conducive environment were considered.

According to the Canadian Association of Public Libraries (2001), advocacy is a planned, deliberated, sustained effort to raise awareness of an issue. It's an ongoing process in which support and understanding are built incrementally over an extended period of time and using a wide variety of marketing and public relations tools. Over the years teacher librarians have used the terms of promotion, public relations, marketing, and advocacy interchangeably, but there are some distinct differences attached to each of the terms. Bonanno (2005) opine that advocacy uses promotion, public relations and marketing to indicate that what is currently being done within the school community will be greatly enhanced by what the school library and teacher librarian can offer. Advocacy attempts to influence the perceptions of the target audience by connecting with their agenda to demonstrate how the school library and the services of the teacher librarian can advance the position of the school as an information literate learning community. Planned and deliberate advocacy activities will work towards building effective partnerships, influential relationships, interactive decision-making, and collaborative activity (Bonanno 2005).

Advocacy according to Gitachu (2008) is a set of targeted actions directed at decision makes in support of a specific policy issue. In other words, advocacy are specific actions executed in order to gain support in policy issues. No wonder Myenzi (2008) sees it as an action oriented art of persuasion to bring about change in policies, recourses allocations, service delivery and or behavior that affect the public of a particular society. Looking at it from the librarianship point of view, Mlanga (2002) defined advocacy as a sustained effort by librarians and lobbying association to keep libraries and the work they do in the minds of the people who make decisions that affects libraries. Beneficially, advocacy can be a tool for improving service

delivery (Mynezi, 2008). In other words it helps to give voice to citizens interest in the same vein, Sloot and Gaanderse (2010) contends that advocacy increases the scope of influence to improve policies and achieve structural change in their areas. Mlanga (2002) opined that the reason for advocacy and lobbying is that things are not going well in the library sector, to him, while libraries are integral units in country's welfare infrastructure, they are not immune to having their findings or programs jeopardized by changing political environments.

Technically, different techniques can be applied to advocacy, but Myenzi (2008) identified the following as techniques for effective advocacy in the library which include publication of popular information and promotional education such as magazines, newsletters, posters, pamphlets, information sheet and banners, inviting key government officials to officiate and or attend functions organized by advocacy groups, indoor consultation forums, use of open forums and outreach programs, use of comer system amongst others. Aside from advocacy, the library environment if conducive for learning can also attract many to visit it.

Njanja (2009) asserts that every organization, irrespective of the nature and size, does not operate or exist in a vacuum but within a certain environment; and many of the forces that make up the environment usually create some challenges and opportunities which directly or indirectly affect the existence, operations, and survival or otherwise of the organization. Consequently, librarians and information professionals must be able to anticipate this changing library environment and develop the vision and competencies at all levels in their organizations/ institutions to embrace this dynamic future.

The impact of a conducive environment on institutional performance and success cannot be underestimated, and as posited by Adeoye and Elegunde (2012), organizations are starting to recognize environmental performance as a source of competitive advantage. Just like other business organizations, academic libraries also operate within two major types of environment, that is, internal and external environment. In the changing environment, the user needs a specific training in the use of library services, which is effected by the Information communication Technologies. Considering the importance of advocacy and a conducive learning environment to library use, this study is conducted to determine the influence of advocacy and conducive environment to students' patronage of information services in libraries in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem
The role of academic libraries as libraries attached to higher institutions of learning for providing information resources and services to support teaching, learning and research needs of students, staff and other clientele of their institutions. Academic libraries serve complementary purposes including supporting the research of the university, faculties and students. The value of the library collection depends not only on the quantity of information sources but on the effective ways and means of providing and interpreting them to users. The researcher who is a library has observed that despite the importance of the library to the success of students' academic endeavor and the advancement of the staff, many hardly visit the library. Even though many tertiary institution libraries in Rivers State are updated on timely basis,

many library users still complain that there are outdated information in the library. This deprived the library of its' maximum information service use. One could wonder what is responsible for such undesired situation. Many researchers have suggested various library marketing indicators as solution to the low patronage of information resources in the library and many institutions have implemented many of such indicators. However, little attention has been paid to advocacy and effect of the library environment as library marketing indicators by researchers, especially in public tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria. Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the influence of advocacy and conducive environment on patronage of library information services in tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study
1)   To determine the influence of advocacy on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in Rivers State.
2)   To determine the influence of conducive environment on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in Rivers State.

Research Questions
1)   What is the influence of advocacy on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in Rivers State?
2)   What is the influence of conducive environment on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in Rivers State?

Hypotheses
1.   There is no significant influence of advocacy on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in Rivers State.
2.   There is no significant influence of conducive environment on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in Rivers State.

RESEARCH METHODS

The ex-post facto design was used for this study. It involves collection of standardized information from a sample of the population. The researcher finds the ex-post facto design more applicable here than other research designs because the events to be measured has already occurred and the researcher only has to make inference about the influence of library marketing indicators and students' patronage of information services based on facts already on ground. The study was conducted in public institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria. The population of this study comprised 12739 registered undergraduate library users in the public tertiary institution libraries under study in 2021/2022 academic year. The sample of the study was 790 registered undergraduate library users being 7.5% of the registered undergraduate library users in the sampled institutions. Multistage sampling procedure was employed in the study. Stage one: three public tertiary institutions in Rivers State, Nigeria were randomly selected using cap and draw method to ensure that all universities had equal opportunity of being selected. Stage two: 7.5% of the registered undergraduate library users were randomly selected which resulted in 790 registered undergraduate library users. A researcher-developed questionnaire named

"Advocacy, Conducive Environment and Students' Patronage of Information Services Questionnaire" (ACESPISQ) was used in collecting relevant data. ACESPISQ is a 2-part questionnaire for undergraduate library users. Part A seeks for demographic information of the respondents; and part B consists of 20 items with a 4-point scale responses that solicit data on exhibition, selective dissemination of information and students' patronage of information services. The options in the four-point scale were Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) which will be scored 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The instrument was subjected to face validity by three lecturers in the Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt. The experts were from the Department of Educational Technology and Library Science, University of Port Harcourt. Four items were amended in the questionnaire, suggestions on separating items with two or more ideas were given. Their suggestions and corrections were effected on the instrument before it was used to collect data for the study.

Internal consistency reliability was conducted for the instrument. To obtain this, the instrument was administered to 30 respondents who were selected from the population of the study but were not included in the study sample. The scores obtained from the respondents were subjected to Cronbach Alpha statistics. The reliability coefficient obtained for the instrument was .86. The instrument was therefore regarded as reliable and good for the study since the coefficient was high. Mean was used to answer the research questions and independent t-test statistics was used in testing null hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at 0.05 alpha level for test of significant difference. If the calculated t-test is greater than the critical t-test value at .05 significant level, the null hypotheses will be rejected but otherwise accepted. Score of 12.5 and above was regarded as agreeing to each variable in the questionnaire but less than 12.5 was regarded as disagreeing. This was used to arrange the scores of the dependent variables corresponding to respondent who agreed to the items from those who did not. This was used as a measure of influence.

RESULT

Research Question 1
What is the influence of advocacy on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria?
Mean was used in answering the research questions, summary data shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Advocacy on Students' Patronage of Information Services

Items	n	Mean	S D
The library sends their representatives to institutional functions	783	3.26	.99
Library advocates request for contributions from users while making acquisition	783	3.19	.98
Advocate organizes library orientation education for us the users	783	3.33	.87
Their representatives handle their current awareness services	783	3.46	.72
Their advocates attract funding bodies to the library	783	3.53	.89
Grand Mean		**3.35**	

The result in Table 1 indicated the mean of advocacy on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The grand mean of 3.35 indicated that there is influence of advocacy on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. However, the items "Library advocates request for contributions from users while making acquisition" and "The library sends their representatives to institutional functions" with mean of 3.19 and 3.26 respectively have the least influence on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries while the items "Their advocates attract funding bodies to the library" and "Their representatives handle their current awareness services" with mean of 3.53 and 3.46 respectively have the least influence on students' patronage of information of services in the federal university libraries.

Research Question 2
What is the influence of conducive environment on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria?
Mean was used in answering the research questions, summary data shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Conducive Environment on Students' Patronage of Information Services

Items	N	Mean	S D
There is adequate facilities in the library	783	3.53	.62
The library influence my learning process	783	3.59	.71
The seating arrangement is exquisite	783	3.53	.62
There are signage's in the library for easy access and retrieval of information resources	783	3.53	.88
The library environment reflects valuable learning information	783	3.66	.70
Grand Mean		3.57	

The result in Table 2 indicated the mean of conducive environment on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The grand mean of 3.57 indicated that there is influence of conducive environment on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. However, the items "The library environment reflects valuable learning information" and "The library influence my learning process" with mean of 3.66 and 3.59 respectively have the highest influence on students' patronage of information services in federal university libraries while the items "There is adequate facilities in the library" and "The seating arrangement is exquisite" with mean of 3.53 and 3.53 respectively have the least influence on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Hypothesis 1
There is no significant influence of advocacy on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.
Independent t-test was used in testing the hypothesis, summary data shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Independent t-test Analysis of Advocacy on Students' Patronage of Information Services in Federal University Libraries

Advocacy	N	Mean	S D	t	df	Sig.
Utilized	350	34.6629	2.23172	28.47	781	.000
Not Utilized	433	28.6212	3.42576			

The result in Table 3 indicated that the calculated t-value of 28.47, p = .000 involving the influence of advocacy on patronage of information services in federal university libraries is significant at 781 degrees of freedom and .05 levels of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant influence of advocacy on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria is rejected. Hence, there is significant influence of advocacy on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2
There is no significant influence of conducive environment on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.
Independent t-test was used in testing the hypothesis, summary data shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Independent t-test Analysis of Conducive Environment on Students' Patronage of Information Services in Federal University Libraries

Conducive Environment	N	Mean	S D	t	df	Sig.
Available	316	34.98	1.92	28.54	781	.000
Not Available	467	28.85	3.48			

The result in Table 4 indicated that the calculated t-value of 28.54, p = .000 involving the influence of conducive environment on patronage of information services in federal university libraries is significant at 781 degrees of freedom and .05 levels of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant influence of conducive environment on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria is rejected. Hence, there is significant influence of conducive environment on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Advocacy and Students' Patronage of Information Services
The result of testing null hypothesis 5 indicated that advocacy has significant influence on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The reason for this result could be that the libraries have not reduced their effort in advertising their content to new students. However, the result could also indicated that libraries without regular awareness of their content might experience low patronage by students and other members of the university community, especially newly admitted students. This is in line with Mlanga (2002) definition of advocacy as a sustained effort by librarians and lobbying association to keep libraries and the work they do in the minds of the people who make decisions that affects libraries. This might be done through publication of newsletters,

pamphlets posters banners among others. The finding of this study is in support of Henri, Hay and Oberg (2002), who indicated that by utilizing all the tools of promotion, marketing and public relations in any advocacy activity a librarian is able to build a working relationship with clienteles to identify and agree to some common elements in respect to the role and function of the library and its personnel and services. Also, the finding of this study is in support of the findings of Ayanda and Taiwo (2008) who conducted a study on the impact of advocacy on library management, a marketing perspective and found out a significant impact of advocacy on library marketing.

Conducive Environment and Students' Patronage of Information Services
The result of testing null hypothesis 6 indicated that conducive environment has significant influence on students' patronage of information services in the federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The reason for this result could be that the conducive library environment attracts students to using the library and gaining from the vast amount of information available in the library. It could also be an indication that poor library environment might discourage students from making use of the library. A library with poor light might be difficult for students to stay no matter the amount of current and timely information available in the library. Ventilation is also necessary in the library for it to attract people to stay and patronize the library services. The significant influence of conducive environment on students' patronage of information is an indication that a conducive environment will attract more students to the library, while a non-conducive library environment will drive students away from the library. The finding of this study is similar to that of Popoola (2008) who found out that there was significant relationship between conducive environment and use of library information products and services.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that advocacy and conducive environment can improve students' patronage of library information services in tertiary institutions in Rivers State.

Recommendations

i.   Librarians need to constantly sensitize their students and staff of their institutions about the information services the library renders which can aid in satisfying their information needs, be it for research, learning, teaching and recreational purposes so as to increase patronage of information services and remain viable in the information world.
ii.   It is also recommended that the library should maintain a conducive environment, by providing an automated library in line with emerging technologies with adequate automated equipment so that library users' can have access to electronic information resources, adequate lighting, ventilation, good reading carrels and chairs, well labelled bookshelves with well shelved current information resources such that when students' visit the library in search of their information needs they will be comfortable. This in turn will increase students' patronage of information services.

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