

Library Education Programmers and Users' Accessibility to Information Resources in Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede, Nigeria

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Abstract

Library education programme in any academic library is planned to ease the work of librarians and at the same time quickens the efforts of the users in accessing and utilizing library materials. However, the aim of this programme is not felt significantly in the ways and manner students of Federal Polytechnic, Ede use library resources. To elicit responses from respondents, 1400 copies of questionnaire were distributed to both male and female students, out of which 1205(86%) were returned and found suitable for analysis. The respondents affirm library user education as being germane to the use of library materials and resources. The findings further revealed library orientation, bibliographic instruction and library tour as popular methods of library education programme. Furthermore, the respondents indicated their difficulties in accessing library resources independently due to low level of user education. In the light of the findings, the researchers recommended that the polytechnic library should improve on its library orientation programme. Also, priority should be given to the use of bibliographic aids and guides to help users in the use of library resources effectively and efficiently with minimal or no assistance. Equally, overhead projector, electronic board and Power Point should be employed in delivering library education programmes among others.

Keywords: Library education programme; users' accessibility; information resources; federal polytechnic

Introduction

Academic libraries such as the polytechnic libraries constitute integral and indispensable part of their establishment. The polytechnic libraries support the teaching, learning and research needs of the institution they serve. Like any academic institution, no polytechnic establishment can achieve its academic excellence without a functional library to back up its teaching, learning and research mandates. It is the responsibility of the library therefore to ensure that the use of its information sources, resources and services are maximally used to

benefit its users. This is because users are the major component in information system. No matter how large the stock of a library is, if the services and its resources are not fully utilized, such a library will end up being a white elephant project. In other words, it is worthy to note that any attempt on the part of the library to ignore the satisfaction of its users will be done at the library's peril.

One of the fundamental laws of the library is that the resources (books and non-books) be well consulted. If this must stand, access to relevant information is highly essential

particularly in academic and research libraries. No wonder, Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) identified accessibility as one of the pre-requisites of information use. The more accessible information sources are, the more likely they are to be used, and readers tend to use information sources that require the least effort to access, hence the necessity for library education. Library education equips a user with enough knowledge on the use of the library. This will enable the user to use the library resources effectively and efficiently. The reason being that, library processes could be so complex that an average user may not easily comprehend how to utilize the available resources. According to Opaleke (1998), user education programmes are planned in tertiary institutions to ease the work of librarians and quicken the efforts of patrons in getting and utilising the library materials. As a result of the era of information explosion in which we are, information is expanding at a very fast rate and new resources are being introduced into the library (Aina, 2004). With the advent of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) which has permeated almost all the activities of libraries, it is important to explain

the working of the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede to a new user in detail.

The Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede came into existence in 1993. It is a vital instructional information centre set up to support the academic and research needs of the polytechnic community. The mandate of the library is generally subsumed in the general vision and mission of the Polytechnic which is a technological institution engaged in education, research and training of middle-level manpower targeted at sustainable development of the nation. The library's collection is strong in print (23,476 vols.), however, the electronic resources are fast growing. The library was designed to have three wings under three phased developments namely; the central, south-west and the north-east wings. The central and north-east wings have since been fully completed. Presently, the library can conveniently accommodate close to one thousand users at a time. Work is yet to commence on the south-west wing. To be able to access the library's collection, two catalogues are put in place. They are the manual card catalogue and the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC).

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Friday	08 .30am	-	8.00pm
Saturday	10.00am	-	3.00pm

EXAMINATION PERIOD

Monday – Friday	08.30am	-	9.00pm
Saturday	11.00am	-	9.00pm
Sunday	4.00pm	-	9.00pm

SEMESTER BREAK and LONG VACATION

Monday -Friday	08.30am	-	5.00pm
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Statement of the problem

Students in Nigerian polytechnics like any tertiary institution are introduced to the use of library in one form or the other, in order that the users might know what to consult in their quest

for information. Personal observations have shown that many students in the Federal Polytechnic, Ede find it difficult to explore the available information sources thus, leading to poor appreciation of the library's resources and

services. This has contributed to their inability to embark on meaningful researches thus making them poor library users. In other words, accessing information with ease in the academic environment still seems to have some challenges that have made the process frustrating to many users and therefore hindering the full access and utilization of needed materials. It is against this backdrop that this paper tends to examine library education programme in Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede and its influence on users' accessibility to information resources.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the type of library education programme for users by the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede.
2. To examine the methods used in educating the library users at the Federal Polytechnic, Ede.
3. To determine the adequacy of the library education programme at the Federal Polytechnic, Ede.
4. To identify the levels of accessibility to information resources at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede.
5. To find out the constraints to accessing information resources at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede.
6. To determine the significance of the library education programme to the use of information resources at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede.

Research questions

1. What type of library education programme is in place for library users at the Federal Polytechnic, Ede?

2. What are the methods used in imparting library education to users at the Federal Polytechnic, Ede?
3. How adequate is the library education programme for the students of Federal Polytechnic, Ede?
4. What are the various levels of accessibility to information resources at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede?
5. What are the constraints to accessing information resources at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede?
6. To what extent is the library education programme significant to the use of information resources at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede?

Literature review

The main objective of all academic libraries is directly proportionate to the vision and mission of the institution they serve. The general objective of the academic library, irrespective of type or category, is basically to assist the parent institution in carrying out its objectives, which include:

- To support teaching, learning and research activities of the institution it is meant to serve;
- To collect, process and disseminate information to satisfy given queries, demands or research efforts;
- To encourage and create interest in reading, hence expand the reading culture;
- To contribute to the achievement of the institution objectives;
- To give orientation to users as regards various services available in the library.

Aliyu (2002) corroborated this by saying that the main function of an academic library is to support the objectives of the institution which

are in the areas of learning, teaching, research and community services. In realisation of this objective, a functional library user education is germane to effective teaching, learning and research activities of any tertiary institution.

Kumar and Phil (2009) referring to Shahi (2007) define users' education as a process of activities involved in making the users of the library conscious of tremendous value of information in day to day life. Also, it is to develop and kindle the interest of users to seek information as and when they are required. Indeed, it introduces the users to the physical facilities and services of the library to enable them find their ways through the maze of organized knowledge. Users' education, according to Udoumoh (2006) as reported by Nwabueze, Ozioko and Igwesi (2013), helps to create the right kind of atmosphere for effective communication between users and the library staff.

Nithyanadam, Dhanakar, and Rajasekar (2006) opine that library user education can simply be defined as a planned process and technique aimed at equipping library users' with the basic skills to bring about the optimal use of resources available in a given library or libraries. It is a form of education for library users. This instructional programme established the educational role of an academic library as affirmed by Audu (2006) that, user education programme connotes the educational role of the library which aims at changing users' behaviour and experiences towards the use of library resources to meet their information needs namely; study, learning and research. The essence is to make library patrons learn how to make effective and efficient use of library resources. It is an organized programme practised across various types of libraries to enable library users' acquire skills that allow them use the library resources independently,

effectively and become information literates. For libraries to assist in the promotion of access to knowledge, they must help in identification, location and delivery of information or documents sought by any researcher (Aguolu and Aguolu, 2002).

Adeola (2007) further added that this kind of education is an instruction given to users to help them make the best use of library services. The central theme of these definitions is on the assistance given to readers in libraries on how to make effective use of library resources. No doubt, user education seems to be the solution to easy, effective and efficient use of any academic library. Above all, library orientation and instruction are major programs used in imparting skills into every new library user especially students just coming into the higher institution of learning. These programs help in exposing students to various types of library facilities, resources and services. In other words, they are the techniques or methods used in familiarising students with the library and its resources to enhance effective and efficient use of all available information materials.

User education as a library function

Several scholars have posited that user education is the second most important role of the librarian in the development of any institution, irrespective of level of specialisation. Though Imam, Adeyoyin, Jegede, and Adesanya (2008) are of the views that, user education is still relatively new in Nigeria. Apart from occasional articles found on the subject in local library literature, not much is happening in Nigerian libraries by way of carefully planned and executed users' education programme. Except for some academic libraries that make efforts at formal users' education

programmes, the idea is yet to become a cardinal function of libraries.

User education as a library's function is complementary to the role of information service provision. User education tends to break the communication barrier between the information resources of a library and the library user. The librarian needs both good professional education and sense of the media of information materials in the library to be able to inculcate in the users the life-long habit of self-discovery and learning through effective library use.

The importance of users' education cannot be over emphasized; this is because, users' education prepares library users to become efficient and self reliant in the use of library resources. Users' education as one of the foundations of the library is meant to complement the provision of information services to users by way of breaking communication barrier between information resources of the library and the users. Adeola (2007) corroborated that users' education provides a useful structured access to selected information resources within a given subject area in continuing education and professional development. Also, Iyiade and Oyekanmi (2009) supported this assertion that there is the need for library users' education programmes in all institutions of learning because most institution libraries in Nigeria such as universities, polytechnics and colleges of education face the problem of information explosion as well as profuse of scholarly publications coupled with the fact that the average library user is desirous of retrieving information materials accurately within the shortest period of time. They further asserted that one of the ways of stimulating the active use of books and other materials stored in our

higher institution libraries is by teaching the use of library especially to freshers. Also in the same vein, Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) (2004) explains that users' education (which is a part of information literacy) forms the basis for life-long learning which is common to all disciplines and to all levels of education. It also enables learners to master content and extend their investigation and become more self-directed and assume greater control over their own learning. The AACR (2004) maintains that academic librarians evaluate and coordinate the selection of intellectual resources (both print and electronic) for the various programmes, maintain the collections and create many access points to information. Furthermore, academic librarians provide instruction to students and faculty members on the use of library resources.

Benefits of users' education

The ultimate objective of user education is to enable users exploit the resources of a library to the fullest and develop the skills to use the resources of the library independently. Aina (2004) stated that the library provides user education in order to equip a user with enough knowledge on the use of the library. Among other numerous benefits, users' education enables the library users to use the library resources independently, effectively and efficiently. The reason being that, organisation and arrangement of library materials could be so complex that an average user may not easily comprehend. It is therefore important to explain this complexity to a new user in details. The programme imparts skills and knowledge required to use the library catalogues, and other means of accessing or locating materials held in a particular library as well as to ensure precision given in bibliographic references.

According to Audu (2006), the interrelated components of user education such as user awareness, library orientation, bibliographic instruction and interesting profiling can thus be used interchangeably. He is of the views that user awareness aims to increase awareness of the library as a primary source of information which users may turn to for assistance whenever the need arises. Imam et al (2008) in a similar form, categorised users' education programme into four groups namely:

- *User awareness*: This entails making the library users to be aware of the materials available in the library. It is done periodically, especially when new materials are acquired into the library. It is not for the new users but library users at all times in general.
- *Library orientation*: It is a common programme in academic libraries. It is usually organised at the beginning of a session for new students at a time. The disadvantage of this method is that it does not cater for the individual but for a large group of people.
- *Bibliographic instruction*: This involves instructing the users on how to search and source for materials in the library. It gives a step-by-step instruction on how to access and use the library's collection.
- *Tour*: It is usually done for a small group of users and it is more of practical session showing library users different aspects of library's collection, different sections of the library, the library's catalogue and the OPAC among others.

Having examined critically from the above, the benefits of users' education can be presented as follows:

- Creation of better interest in the use of library;
- Enhancement of effective use of library resources;
- Saves both users and librarians' time;
- Gives better understanding of the library rules and regulations;
- Reduction of library user reliance on the library staffers;
- Encourages independent research.

Research methodology

A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. Stratified random sampling was adopted in selecting 1400 patrons who could be regarded as active library users. They consisted 585 male and 620 female ND and HND students of the Federal Polytechnic, Ede. Out of 1400 copies of questionnaire distributed, 1205 copies representing 86% response rate was returned and found suitable for the analysis. The response rate of 86% was considered adequate and suitable for analysis in that, the standard acceptable for most research studies is 60% response rate (Dulle, Minish-Majanja and Cloete, 2010).

The research instruments adopted for this research work included questionnaire and interview. The questionnaire was divided into three (3) sections. Section A centres on the personal data of the respondents, while section B focuses on the availability and accessibility of information resources and section C covers the organisation of users' education programme in the library. Data gathered through the use of the questionnaire were analyzed with descriptive statistical method such as frequency counts and simple percentages. A structured interview with the library staff also assisted in the gathering of the data.

Analysis and presentation of data

Questionnaire distribution and response rate

Table 1 below reveals that 1400 copies of questionnaire were distributed, while 1205 copies were duly completed, valid and returned, representing 86% response rate.

Table 1. **Distribution of questionnaire and response rate**

S/N	Gender	No distributed	No returned	%
1.	Male	700	585	83.5
2.	Female	700	620	88.5
Total		1400	1205	86

Question 1: **What type of library education programme is in place for library users at the Federal Polytechnic, Ede?**

Table 2 reveals different types of library education programmes available at the Federal Polytechnic, Ede. It is evident that library orientation has the highest number of respondents which is 574 representing (47.64%), followed by bibliographic instruction 282 (23.4%), library tour 244 (20.40%) and library instruction 105 (8.71%).

Table 2: **Type of library education programme available at the Federal Polytechnic, Ede**

S/N	Type of Library Education	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Library orientation	574	47.64
2.	Library tour	244	20.25
3.	Bibliographic aids and guides	282	23.40
4.	Library instruction	105	8.71
Total		1205	100.00

Question 2: **What are the methods used in imparting library education to users at the Federal Polytechnic, Ede?**

Table 3 shows that library orientation as a means of imparting library education to library users at the Federal Polytechnic, Ede has the highest number of respondents (576: 47.80%), followed by library tour (242: 20.80%), library based instruction (192: 15.94%), one-on-one instruction (98: 8.13%), colleagues and friends (86: 7.14%) and finally computer aided instruction (11: 0.91%) respectively.

Table 3: **Methods/means of acquiring library education**

S/N	Variables	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Library tour	242	20.08
2.	Library orientation	576	47.80
3.	Library based instruction	192	15.94
4.	One-on-one instruction	98	8.13
5.	Colleagues and friends	86	7.14
6.	Computer aided instruction	11	0.91
Total		1205	100.00

Question 3: How adequate is the library education programme for the students of Federal Polytechnic, Ede?

Table 4 depicts that majority of the respondents affirm that the library education programme at the Federal Polytechnic, Ede by the Polytechnic Library is grossly inadequate (719: 59.67%). Furthermore, 262 respondents representing 21.74% affirmed that the library education programme is adequate. 117 (9.71%) respondents were of the opinion that it was very adequate while 87 (7.22%) remained undecided.

Table 4: Adequacy of library education programme

S/N	Variables	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Very adequate	117	9.71
2.	Adequate	262	21.74
3.	Not adequate	739	61.33
4.	Undecided	87	7.22
	Total	1205	100.00

Question 4: What are the various levels of accessibility to information resources at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede?

From the responses in Table 5, it shows that library resources are not easily accessible to users at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede (698: 57.93%). However, in the opinion of 376 respondents representing 31.20%, resources at the Polytechnic Library were easily accessible. This is also corroborated by 89 (7.39%) respondents who affirmed very easily accessible.

Table 5: Level of accessibility to information materials at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede by respondents

S/N	Variable	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Very easily accessible	89	7.39
2.	Easily accessible	376	31.20
3.	Not easily accessible	698	57.93
4.	No response	42	3.48
	Total	1205	100.00

Question 5: What are the constraints to accessing information resources at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede?

Table 6 reveals that, inability to use the library's catalogue constitutes the major constraints to accessing information resources at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede (481: 39.92%), closely followed by lack of direction and instruction from the library (289: 23.98%). Similarly, misplacement and mis-shelving of library materials have been pencilled down as one of the

challenges facing the library users at the Federal Polytechnic, Ede (213: 17.68%), while 111 (9.21%) respondents also affirmed inadequacy of library materials. In addition, 69 (5.73%) respondents pointed out that there were no shelve guides while 42 (3.48) respondents pinpointed lack of call numbers on the spine of books on shelves as constituting constraints to easy access to information resources.

Table 6. **Constraints to accessing information resources in the library**

S/N	Constraints	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1.	Misplacement of library materials on shelves	213	17.68
2.	Inadequate/non availability of materials	111	9.21
3.	Inability to use library catalogue	481	39.92
4.	Lack of direction/instruction from the library	289	23.98
5.	Non-availability of shelf guide	69	5.73
6.	Lack of call numbers on books' spine	42	3.48
	TOTAL	1205	100.00

Question 6: **To what extent is the library education programme significant to the use of information resources at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede?**

Table 7 shows the level of significance of library education programme to the accessibility of library resources. While majority 749 (62.16%) claimed that it is significant, 436 respondents (36.18%) claimed that it is very significant. However, only 11 (0.91%) affirmed not significant response, while 9 (0.75%) did not respond to this question at all.

Table 7: **Level of significance of library education to accessibility of library materials at the Federal Polytechnic Library, Ede.**

Variable	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Very significant	436	36.18
Significant	749	62.16
Not significant	11	0.91
No response	9	0.75
Total	1205	100.00

Results of interview

Question 1: **Does the library offer library education programme to students?**

The response to this question is yes and the interview revealed that users' education programme has always been conducted for newly admitted students on arrival. Results of

interview also showed that library education programme is in place in the institution library. It is very effective and has been as old as the library itself. The types of library education programmes available in the library include:

- Library orientation;
- Bibliographic aids and guides;
- Library instruction; and
- Library tour.

Question 2: How often does the library organize users' education programme?

It was revealed that library education programme is conducted on yearly basis during the students' general orientation programme organized by the institution.

Question3: How are the library resources organized or processed?

It was revealed that the library materials, especially books are majorly organized using Library of Congress Classification Scheme and could be accessed through 3 by 5 catalogue cards filed in the catalogue cabinet. Also it was revealed from the interview that members of staff of the library do assist library users in locating information resources as well as other means such as bibliographic aids and guides.

Discussion of findings

The findings revealed that library orientation is the major form of library education programme in the institution library organised on a yearly basis. The means of acquiring users' education is mostly through library orientation followed by library tour and library instruction programme respectively.

Findings also revealed that many respondents could not easily access library resources due to their low level of library education while some could easily access it. This does not imply that information materials in the library are not easily accessible, but rather some users lack the

required expertise to easily access the collection.

The constraints to locating library information resources vary from inability to use library catalogue to lack of direction/instruction from the library as well as misplacement of library materials on the shelf. Similarly, inadequacy and non availability of materials and absence of shelf guides and call numbers on the spine of the books constitute some challenges to easy access of the library's collection. This has revealed various constraints to making access to materials needed by users without mincing words.

On the whole, the significance of library education programme on accessibility of library resources showed that library education programme is very significant and germane to the use of library materials. This tallies with the finding of Suleiman (2012) that user education by the libraries is important in bringing about positive change to the behavioural patterns of students towards the use of library resources. This is necessary so as to enhance their academic performance. The interview also revealed that users' education programme is in place but takes place on annual basis during the course of general students' orientation programme. However, it has a positive impact on the library users.

It is no gainsaying that library user education is very useful in helping students to meet their information needs. For students to be able to utilise the fast collection in the library to fast track good academic performance, library user education must be accorded a priority by all the stakeholders including the management of the polytechnic and the library. The importance of library user education has been affirmed by many scholars (Suleiman, 2012; Ogunmodede,

Adio and Odunola (2011); Audu, (2006); Aina, (2004); Kannappanavar and Chidananda-Swamy, (2012) among others.

Conclusion

Users' education is an essential mechanism for ensuring effective use of library and information materials through orientation, bibliographic tour, and users' awareness. Its efficacy is in creating in the library and information users the right attitudes to learning and use of information resources. This could be in various forms as may be decided by the library from time to time. Users' education could be designed as a stand-alone course designated as "use of library" or an embedded course as part of general studies, offered by newly admitted students.

Recommendations

Based on the outcome of this study, it is therefore recommended among others that:

- The polytechnic library should improve upon the use of once in a year library orientation programme;
- The management of the polytechnic library should use bibliographic aids and guides to help users use its resources effectively and efficiently with minimal or no assistance.
- The use of PowerPoint to deliver user education lecture to students should be intensified so as to make it a blended one.
- as well use of modern methods like power point technology in this information technology (IT) driven age in delivering its lectures should be given priority.
- Library registration should be made mandatory for all students of the institution.
- Recent information materials should be acquired while the existing ones should be properly accessible to users.
- The various access points to information resources of the library should be made

available to users. In addition, they should also be educated on how to use the various access points in accessing available information materials.

- Users should be educated the more on leaving consulted library materials on the table after usage as this would solve the problem of misplacement of library materials on the shelves.
- More attention should be given to users' awareness and library tour. In addition, there should be awareness education to users on all available services within the library.

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