

## **AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF STUDENTS' USE OF IMO STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY DURING VACATION PERIODS**

**BY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examined students use of Imo state university library, Owerri during vacation periods. Survey method was employed using questionnaire and direct observation as instruments for data collection. A total of 109 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to students using the library out of which 107 (98.2%) were collected. The mass of data collected were analysed in tables using descriptive statistics, frequency counts and simple percentages. The findings revealed that the library is mostly used by final year students who are writing their research projects. Journals and old research projects are mostly used by these students even though they encounter some problems while using the library. The paper concludes that since the library is well utilized by students during vacation periods, the management should improve the library facilities and resources so as to give adequate services to the library patrons during the period.

**Keywords:** University library, student users, vacation periods

### **INTRODUCTION**

University Libraries according to Tsafe (2004) are established primarily to support the teaching, learning and research activities of their parent universities. The Library as we know occupies a prominent and unparalleled position in the education sector. That is why Ajidahun (2006) described the library as the "heart beat" of the educational system.

Academic achievements of both the staff (academic staff) and students of every university leans heavily on the strength (resources and services) of their library. Connotatively, this implies that no university without a good functional library can claim to produce the best intellectual and academic result as "no bad tree begets a good fruit". With the strategic position occupied as well as the roles played by the university libraries, it will not be out of place to describe it as the "pride of the university".

Afolabi-Iye (as cited by Ndedde, 2000), Okiy (1998) and Metzger (1991) are among many authors who have emphasized the importance of university libraries in their various studies. Suffice it to say that no university can exist and function effectively even in the face of e-library system without a physical functional library.

Academic libraries do well to justify the confidence reposed in them by the university community and "outsiders" by providing the users with the needed information resources and services even in the midst of scarcity and economic recession. That is why the library is the only service department/section in the university that works up to 10pm (Ajidahun, 2006) especially in residential universities.

Imo state university library like its counterparts in other universities came into being in 1992 following the establishment of the university. It has a Main Library situated in the center of the university compound, eight faculty libraries located in the faculty blocks and twenty-two Departmental libraries providing the specialized needs of the parent Departments. Today, the library has 65,000 Volumes of books, 1,300 bound periodicals, 4,800 Documents and research projects, 480 unbound journals and 6 Newspaper titles for 11 years.

The Library is open from Monday to Saturday from 9am to 6pm. It serves both academic and non-academic members of staff, regular undergraduate and postgraduate students as well as part-time students under the aegis of Sandwich and Weekend programme of the Institute of Continuing Education Programme (ICEP). The library provides numerous services to her clientele as obtained in other University libraries such as Circulation services, Reference, Bibliographic, Reprographic, Loan services, Referral and Inter-library loan services etc.

Unlike other metropolitan university libraries, Imo state university library do not remain open beyond 6pm because the university is non-residential. Students who are the major users of the library live in rented apartments in the town or come from their Parents/ Guardians homes.

The library unlike other sections in the university gives full services during vacation periods and on weekends to serve both the regular and part time/sandwich students. In some cases, the library is compelled to open and render full scale services during public holidays because of pressures from students and university management especially during examination periods.

Vacation period is usually the few weeks when students vacate the campus after the semester's examination to enable them refresh themselves and replenish their purses in readiness for the next semester's academic activities. It is also called holiday period. During vacation period, students are expected to leave the campus to their respective places of abode. Teaching and learning activities are usually halted in the universities. University libraries use this period to re-arrange their collections, weed

obsolete or mutilated materials and do proper shelf-reading because the pressure on the library staff and resources has reduced. However, during this period, it is observed that most students still come to make use of the library either from their homes or from wherever they are staying temporarily. With this, one begins to wonder what these crop of students actually do in the library instead of going to enjoy their vacation. This study, therefore aims at studying the activities of those students who stay back to make use of the library during holiday.

### **THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study is set to achieve the following objectives.

1. To determine the faculty of study of students who use the library during vacation periods.
2. To determine the levels of study of student users of the library during vacation periods.
3. To determine the reasons why students use the library during vacation periods.
4. To ascertain the sections of the library used more by students during vacation periods.
5. To examine the types of information resources consulted by the students.
6. To identify the problems encountered by student users of the university library during vacation periods.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study will enable the library management to know the extent the library and its resources are utilized during vacation periods. The study will also enable the library management to evaluate their functions and services to users of the library during vacation periods and to make improvements where necessary. Again, librarians and librarians-in-training will also find the study very useful as it will be an additional literature in this area of study in librarianship.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Many authors have indeed written extensively on the use of library study by students and other professionals. However, none of these studies was specific on students' use of the library during vacation period. This therefore justifies the scarcity of literature in this aspect of study.



This notwithstanding, students receive orientation on how to make use of the library right from the day they were admitted into the university (Arua & Chikezie, 2006). According to Onwubike (2005), students (both regular, part time and sandwich) are encouraged to fall back on the university library to augment whatever information/knowledge they acquire in the classrooms during lectures.

To enhance the students use of the library, user education programme is introduced in the university as a General Studies (GST) course. According to Sujatha (1993). User education is any effort or programme, which will guide and instruct existing and potential users individually or collectively with the objective of facilitating the recognition of their own information needs, formulation of these needs, effective and efficient use of these services.

Edom (2007) also observed that user education tends to equip library users with the knowledge they need to have concerning their institution's library, its resources, the functions, services as well as the "dos " and "don'ts" of the library.

Reasons for students use of the library vary from individual to individual. Okonta (2001) posited that students went to the library to browse and read. While Uwa (2007) observed that students used the library because they had test/projects/assignments to write or because the semester examinations were approaching. Studies by Adelani (1998) and Unomah (as cited by Osinulu, 1998) showed that most students use the library to do their assignments. Moreso, Okiy (2000) noted that students used the library more for the purposes of class assignments and research. In a study conducted by Ajidahun (2006) on library utilization at night at the Adekunle Ajasin University library, more than 60% of the students stated that they used the library at night because: they assimilated more when they read in the library at night; they covered more grounds; had more opportunities to do more research; have quick access to books; and they understood what they read more easily at night.

Based on the above assertions, it is possible that students also make use of their university libraries during vacation periods to read their books, write their projects and do outstanding assignments. Some students also go to the library to read for pleasure and recreation.

The types of information materials used by students vary from individual to individual. Iheaturu (2002) observed that most students use serials (periodicals) for their project works. This is because according to Lawal (as cited by Iheaturu, 2002) and Fayose (1995), serials carry up-to-date information in any field of research and knowledge. Amkpa (2000) also

pointed out that most students read their own text books and notes in the library.

Okonta (2001) summarized it when he stated that students read textbooks, monographs, lecture notes, jotters, journals, newspapers and research projects in the library. Some students also consult reference materials for background and specific piece of information, and in some cases, use government publications or special materials.

As envisaged students who use the university libraries especially during vacation periods also encounter some difficulties in their bid to source for information materials. Ndedde (2000) observed that such problems like lack of information retrieval devices, non-provision of library guides and wrong shelving of books were some of the problems experienced by library users. Afolabi (1999) categorized the library users problems into three; viz

- Bibliothecal problem (that is problems associated with physical organization of information materials in libraries);
- Bibliographical problem (this concern the non indexing and abstracting of some information materials like newspapers and magazines).
- Cognitive factors (this refers to the formulation of subject descriptions, organization of descriptors file or record searching). In his own views, Abanobi (1985) stated that students may also experience the problem of non-provision of bibliographic tools, inadequate provision of resources and improper arrangement of library materials.

Based on the literature reviewed, it is very clear that students make extensive use of the university library even during vacation period, and the types of information materials used by students depend on their specific information needs.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopted the survey method using questionnaire, structured interview and direct observation as the main instruments of data collection. A total of one hundred and nine (109) copies of the questionnaire were directly administered to the student users of the library on different days during the vacation period. All the questions in the questionnaires were framed to help the researcher in the realization of the objectives designed for the study.

To supplement the questions administered to the students, the researcher interviewed the six librarians in-charge of the circulation, reference, serial, research/projects, reprographic and ICT sections of the library and used the opportunity to observe the activities of the students in all the sections of the library. Out of the 109 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 107 (98.2%) were dully answered and returned to the researcher. The data collected were analyzed and presented in tables and using percentages. Interpretation of results was done and inferences drawn.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The respondents were asked to indicate their faculties of study to enable the researcher to determine the faculty whose students used the library most during the vacation period investigated. Their responses are shown on table 1.

**TABLE 1: FACULTY OF STUDY**

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Frequency (F)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Faculty of Agric and Vet Med.	11	10.3
Faculty of Business Admin	15	14
Faculty of Education	12	11.2
Faculty of Engineering	2	1.8
Faculty of Environmental studies	5	4.7
Faculty of Humanities	16	15
Faculty of Medicine and Health Science	10	9.4
Faculty of Science	6	5.6
Faculty of Social Sciences	18	16.8
School of Post graduate Studies.	12	11.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 shows that 18 (16.8%) respondents were students in the faculty of Social Sciences. 16 (15%) respondents were students in the faculty of humanities; while 15 (14%) respondents were students in the faculty of Business Administration, 12(11.2%) respondents were postgraduate students; 11(10.3%) respondents were students in the faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine. 10(9.4%) respondents were students in the faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences. 6(5.6%) respondents were students in the faculty of Sciences. 5(4.7%) respondents were students in the faculty of Environmental Sciences. While 2(1.8%) respondents were students in the faculty of Engineering. From the above analysis, it could be concluded that students in the faculty of social sciences use the library more during vacation period; while students in the faculty of Engineering rated low because it was the newest faculty introduced in 2007.

The respondents were also requested to state their levels of study. Their responses are as shown on table 2.

**TABLE 2 LEVEL OF STUDY**

Option	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
100Level	7	6.5
200 Level	13	12.1
300 Level	15	14
400 Level	58	54.2
500 Level	2	1.9
Post graduate students	12	11.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 2 shows that 58 (54.2%) of the respondents who made use of the library during the vacation periods were the 400 level (project) students. Another 15 (14%) of respondents were 300 level students, while 13 (12.1%) of the respondents were 200 level students. Table 2 also shows that (11.2%) of the respondents were Post Graduate students. Only 7 (6.5%) of the respondents were 100 level students. There were no 600 level students in the library while there were 2 (1.9%) respondents who indicated that they were in 500 level. It can be deduced from the analysis that 400 level students use the library more than other students during the vacation periods. Again, the respondents were also requested to state their reasons for using the library during vacation periods. Their responses are as shown on table 3.

**TABLE 3: REASONS FOR USING THE LIBRARY.**

Option	Frequency (F)	Percentage(%)
To write projects	34	31.8
To do assignments	4	3.7
To read newspapers/magazines	6	5.6
To read journals	10	9.3
To consult reference materials	9	8.4
To read personal notes	3	2.8
To borrow textbooks	Nil	Nil
To prepare for examination	10	9.3
To photocopy documents	8	7.5
To typeset documents	Nil	Nil
To browse the net and send mail	4	3.7
To collect referral letters	2	1.9
To do clearance	17	15.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 shows that 34(31.8%) respondents indicated using the library during vacation periods to write their research projects/thesis. 17(15.9%) respondents indicated going to the library to do clearance: 10(9.3%) respondents respectively stated that they visited the library to read newspapers and magazines and to prepare for examination; 9(8.4%) respondents also stated that they used the library to read reference materials; 8(7.5%) stated that they used the library to photocopy documents. 6(5.6%) respondents agreed that they made use of the library to read newspapers and magazines; 4(3.7%) respondents visited the library to browse the net and send mails; 3(2.8%) respondents used the library to read their personal notes; while 2(1.9%) used the library to collect referral letters which would enable them to use other libraries and information centres. None of the respondents indicated going to the library to borrow books because they were on holiday or typeset their documents because business centres were in the town. Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that majority of the students who use Imo State University Library during vacation periods go there to write their research projects. This result corroborates the findings of Uwa (2007) who stated that most students used the library because they had projects/thesis to write.

The respondents were also asked to state the sections of the library they use more during vacation periods. Their responses are as shown on table 4.



**TABLE 4: SECTION(s) OF THE LIBRARY USED.**

Option	Frequency (F)	Percentage(%)
Circulation Section	12	11.2
Reference	11	10.3
Serial	18	16.8
Reserved book section	3	2.8
Documents/projects	47	44
ICTSection	13	12.1
Reprographic section	3	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 4 shows that: 47 (44%) respondents indicated using the documents/projects section of the library; 18(16.8%) respondents indicated that using the Serial Section of the library; 13(12.1%) respondents also stated that they used the ICT section of the library during vacation period; while 12(11.2%) respondents indicated that they used the circulation section of the library. 11(10.3%) respondents indicated that they used the reference section of the library while 3(2.8%) respondents respectively used the reserved book and the reprographic sections of the library. This analysis showed that majority of the students who go to the library during vacation periods do so to use the projects/documents and serial sections of the library where they obtain materials for their research work.

The respondents were equally requested to indicate the types of information resources mostly used in the library during vacation period. Their responses are shown on table 5.

**TABLE 5: INFORMATION RESOURCES CONSULTED.**

Option	Frequency (F)	Percentage(%)
Textbooks	12	11.2
Reference materials	14	13.1
Projects/Thesis	42	39.3
Journals	21	19.6
Newspapers and Magazines	8	7.5
Internet services	10	9.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 5 shows that; 42(39.3%) respondents indicated that they used projects/research whenever they went to the library; 21(19.6%) respondents also indicated that they used journals; while 14(13.1%) respondents agreed that they use reference materials. Only 10(9.3%) respondents stated that they used the internet services in the library. 8(7.5%) respondents indicated that they read newspapers and magazines. This analysis shows that research projects and research journals are mostly used by students of Imo state university library during vacation periods.

**TABLE: 6 PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED**

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency (F)</b>	<b>Percentage(%)</b>
Unavailability of information resources needed.	6	5.6
Lack of space in the library	Nil	Nil
Noise	18	16.8
No light in the library	14	13.1
Loneliness	4	3.7
Lack of assistance from the library staff	5	4.7
The opening and closing time.	13	12.1
Improper shelving of information materials	28	26.2
Non-indexing of newspaper/ magazine	2	1.9
Lack of information retrieval Tools	14	13.1
Non provision of shelf guides/ labels.	3	2.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 6 shows; that 28(26.2%) respondents indicated that the major problem they encountered in the use of Imo state university Library was improper shelving of information materials; 18(16.8%) respondents also indicated that there was always noise in the library. while 14(13.1%) respondents respectively indicated that their problems were lack of information retrieval tools (catalogues, indexes and bibliographies), as well as inadequate light in

the library; 13(12.1%) respondents also indicated that the major problem encountered by them was the opening and closing time of the library; 6(5.6%) respondents agreed that the problem they encountered in the use of the library during vacation periods was that most of the information resources needed were not available; 5(4.7%) respondents indicated that the problem they experienced in the use of the library during vacation periods was that the library staff failed to show much concern to assist them in meeting up with their information needs; 4(3.7%) respondents indicated that the problem they encountered in the use of the library during the vacation period was loneliness; another 3(2.8%) respondents indicated that the shelves did not have guides/labels; Only 2(1.9%) respondents indicated that newspapers/magazines were not comprehensively indexed. None of the respondents indicated that lack of space in the library was a problem. Based on this analysis, it could be seen that the users of Imo state university library during vacation periods are faced with many hiccups.

#### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

It is obvious that students must use the university library during school session as well as during vacation periods. Students' use of the library is inevitable because it offers them great opportunities to make use of various information resources they need to supplement the classroom lectures.

This study has revealed that most of the students who use Imo state university library during vacation periods are project (final year) students who are writing their research project. The types of information materials mostly used by these students are old projects and journals which they find very useful in their own research.

In spite of the fact that students find their university library as a valuable resource center where they can fall back to when the need arises, yet they experience some hiccups which sometimes cripple the full realization of the aims for which they use the library during vacation periods. In solving such problems, the library management should intensify efforts to ensure that the library is stocked with current and relevant books and journals in pursuance of the school curriculum. The repair and maintenance of the library building and facilities that generate noise in the library could be done on weekends. Library staff should exhibit professionalism in the shelving of books as well do periodic shelf reading. They should also provide information retrieval tools to enhance quick access to the materials stocked in the library. The staff should ensure that shelf guides/labels boldly written are pasted on the shelves to guide library users. Efforts should be made to restore regular light in the library. Library staff should assist library clienteles who could not use the library on their own. It is only when these steps are taken that student and other users of the library during vacation periods will benefit maximally from the potentials of Imo state university library.

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