

A SURVEY OF FACULTY USE AND ATTITUDE TOWARD THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire was administered to study faculty use and attitude toward the facilities available at the University of Ilorin Libraries. Analyses of the 161 responses indicate that while 71.5 percent of the faculty use the library resources regularly, 21.6 percent use them rarely, and only 1.9 percent have never used them before.

It also shows that while books and journals are used by 62.1 percent and 44.7 percent respectively, other library materials like indexes, abstracts, newspapers, government publications and microfilms/microfiches are poorly used. Suggestions that can facilitate faculty use of these materials are made.

INTRODUCTION

Faculty use of an academic library can be a major factor in determining what use the other major library users, particularly the students will make of it. The perception of the faculty and their use of academic libraries should therefore be of primary concern to the academic librarian.

A survey conducted by Kenneth Allen¹ shows clearly that the attitude of the individual instructors is the most notable factor influencing student use of the library. Since the faculty is one of the primary users of the academic library, their needs must be of prime concern to the library in setting general goals.

It is for this reason that Ashoor² has stated that "an inquiry into faculty and student attitudes to determine their perception of the adequacy of the resources and services of the university library is of vital importance to the improvement, organization, and planning of library service".

Some studies have attempted to identify distinct variables affecting the faculty attitudes and library use. Nicholson and Bertlett³, for example, in their study on the uses of university libraries discovered that 56.3 percent of the faculty uses were mainly for research purposes. Also the study by Rzasas and Moriarty⁴ on the types and needs of academic library users shows that the principal reason for faculty use was for research purposes.

A survey conducted on the library use pattern of the music education faculty by Allie Wise⁵, Music Librarian of the Western Illinois University, shows that 58 percent use the library weekly, while 53 percent of the faculty use the library about once a month and about 7.5 percent use it once in a semester.

In their study of faculty use of government

publications, McCaghy and Purcell⁶ discovered that one percent of the faculty use the materials about 2 or 3 times a month, while 14 percent use it about once or twice in a semester. While about 23 percent use it once or twice in a year, as much as 62 percent have never used the materials before.

In his study of faculty awareness and attitudes toward academic library reference services, Nelson⁷ found that level of awareness was directly related to rank and length of time at the institution. A study by Whitlatch⁸ on library use patterns among full and part-time faculty and students at the San Jose State University, California, shows that use by faculty is fairly low with 31.9 percent using the library once a week, while 5.2 percent never use the library at all.

His survey shows that majority of the faculty (62.2%) rely on purchased books and periodicals as their primary source of information for teaching and research, while only 29.1% rely on the library as their primary source.

All these surveys have provided the libraries with opportunities to examine the services rendered based on responses from one of its primary clientele. User survey can indeed be an effective tool in planning library services for future faculty and student population.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to survey the attitude and library use pattern of the faculty in order to determine their perception of library resources and services. The survey is also designed to provide some recommendations for the improvement of library service since this is undeniably a high priority of the academic library.

METHODOLOGY

During the month of June 1988, a questionnaire was sent to all the teaching staff in the seven faculties of the University of Ilorin. The list was compiled from the 1986-88 official calendar of the university. All faculty members who were either on study or sabbatical leave, or any other form of leave were excluded. The questionnaire was sent to a total of 306 faculty members.

The survey consisted of nineteen questions in the areas of personal background, library use and library evaluation. The questionnaire was sent through the individual mail boxes at the Porters Lodge of the two campuses of the university. Four weeks after the questionnaire was sent out only about 30% of the questionnaire was returned.

Although the questionnaire allowed some measure of confidentiality of respondents, a form of coding on it allowed a record to be kept of both respondents and non-respondents. Therefore, four weeks after the date of despatch of the original

questionnaire, this researcher had to undertake follow-up personal visits to those who had not responded and this yielded additional responses as completed questionnaires were collected on the spot and those who had misplaced theirs were given extra copies.

One hundred and sixty-one usable responses out of the three hundred and six questionnaires set out were received, the overall response rate being 52.61%, and this was considered relatively good.

The questionnaire consisted of both the independent and dependent variables. The independent variables were contained in questions one and two. While questions one dealt with rank, question two dealt with the faculty of the respondent.

The questions dealing with the dependent variables were aimed at providing information on the issues under enquiry and these dealt with frequency of library use by the faculty, types of library materials used, faculty involvement in materials acquisitions, adequacy of library materials for teaching and research activities, adequacy of arrangement of library materials, co-operation of library staff in answering enquiries and rating of library services.

Each of the above dependent variables is to be tested against the two independent variables of rank and faculty to see if there is any relationship between a faculty member's attitude toward the library and his rank and faculty.

Finally, the questionnaire consisted of an open-ended question which requested respondents to indicate what improvements they would desire for the library.

After the data were coded, the statistical analysis of the questionnaire was done at the Computer Centre of the university according to Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). It provided frequency distribution of the variables as well as tabulation of certain variables. (See Table on page 25-26)

RESULTS

The analysis of the data obtained shows that 161 faculty members responded to the questionnaire. The total number of respondents shows that there were thirteen Assistant Lecturers, (8.1%), twenty-five Lecturers II (15.5%), forty-three Lecturers I (26.7%), sixty-three Senior Lecturers (39.1%), five Readers or Associate Professors (3.1%) and eleven Professors (6.9%). One respondent (0.6%) failed to indicate his/her rank. Furthermore, the information on faculty basis as revealed in Table I shows that faculty of Agriculture had 8(5.0%) respondents, Arts had 29 (18.0%), Business and Social Sciences 21(13.0%), Education 29(18.0%) Engineering and Technology 11(6.9%), Health Sciences 30(18.6%) and Science 33(20.5%).

The questionnaire sought to find out the frequency of library visits by the faculty and their responses are analyzed in Table II. It shows that while only 3 or 1.9% of the faculty visit the library daily, 38 or 23.6% use the library about 1-4 times a week and 74 or 46.0% of the faculty use the library about 1-4 times a month. It further shows that as many as

43 or 26.7% rarely use the library, while only 3 or 1.9% faculty members have never used the library before.

The questionnaire also sought information on why those three faculty members who have never used the library have never done. Two of them claimed that the library does not have what they need, while the third person claimed that he has all the books and journals needed for his teaching and research activities.

The question which sought information on the type of materials faculty members use in the library elicited surprising responses. As contained in Table III books and journals are the most used library materials with 100(62.1%) and 72(44.7%) respectively. Newspapers are used by 11(6.8%) respondents, Indexes and abstracts by 16(9.9%) and 19(11.8%) while government publications are used by 8(5.0%) and microfilms/microfiches are used by only 2(1.2%) of the faculty.

Analysis of the question which requested information on whether the faculty participates in the selection of materials for library acquisitions indicates that only 68 or 42.2 percent actually participate in library materials selection.

A further analysis of the data shows that only 3 or 1.9 percent of the respondents indicated that the library materials in support of their teaching and research activities are quite adequate while 47 or 29.2% indicated that they are partially adequate. The remaining 108 respondents or 67.1 percent are of the opinion that library materials for their teaching and research activities are not adequate.

The survey shows that 41 or 25.9 percent of faculty usually browse at the book shelves for alternative materials when they cannot find the particular materials which they need. 24 or 15.2 percent claimed that they check the subject catalogue for alternative materials, while 27 or 17.1 percent request assistance from the library staff. 54 or 34.2 percent said they tried other University libraries, while only 4 or 2.5 indicated that they do not know what to do.

Responses to the questionnaire also show that 112 or 69.6 percent of the respondents indicated that the library staff are always co-operative in answering their inquiries, while 41 or 25.5 percent stated that the library staff are sometimes co-operative and only one indicated that they are never co-operative. On inter-library loan, 83 or 51.6 percent indicated that they are aware that there exists an inter-library loan arrangement between the university library and other libraries, while 76 or 47.2 percent stated that they are not aware. This service is satisfactory to 57(68.67%) of these respondents.

On library photocopying service, 98 or 60.9 percent indicated that they are aware of its existence, while 58 or 36.0 percent indicated that they are not aware. This service is satisfactory to 59(60.20%) of the respondents, while 23 or 23.47% indicated that the service is poor, and the remaining 16 or 16.33% indicated that they have no opinion on the matter.

The questionnaire also sought the opinion of faculty on whether the manner library materials are arranged on the shelves helps them to locate the

materials they need. Analysis of the responses shows that 78 or 50.3 percent of the respondents report that the arrangement is satisfactory, while 55 or 35.5 percent indicated that it is averagely satisfactory. 22 or 14.2 percent of the respondents indicated that the arrangement is poor.

A further analysis of the data shows that 132 or 84.1 percent of the respondents find the library card catalogue helpful in locating needed materials, while 21 or 13.4 percent stated that the usefulness is just average and only 4 or 2.5 percent of the respondents indicated that it is never useful.

On how frequently the faculty meet with the library staff to discuss improvements to library services and facilities, only 5 or 3.2 percent of the respondents discuss with library staff always, 71 or 44.9 percent discuss sometimes, 41 or 25.5 percent discuss rarely, while another 41 have never discussed with the library staff.

Finally, 67 or 41.6 percent of the faculty are satisfied with the services they receive in the library, while 77 or 47.8 percent are not satisfied. 17 respondents or 10.6 percent failed to respond to this question.

Respondents were requested to make questions for the improvement of library services. Suggestions made include provision of more current journals (52.13%), purchase of more books or replacing of worn out books (27.13%), improving of inter-library loan facility and provision of carrels or reserved seats for the faculty (5.32%) each, improvement of photocopying facility (5.85%) and better arrangement of journals to facilitate easy location (4.25%).

DISCUSSION

The results of this survey show that about 71.4 percent of the faculty visit the library to use its facilities on regular basis, while another 26.6 percent use the library rarely and 1.9 percent have never used it. When this result is compared with the results of the survey by Whitlatch⁹ at the San Jose State California, where he discovered that about 5.2 percent of the faculty had never used the library at all, it must be realised that the faculty at the University of Ilorin uses the library fairly more than what obtains in some other libraries.

Indeed, a further analysis of the results indicate that of the three faculty members who have never used the library, one is a Professor and the other two are Senior Lecturers. These three faculty members were interviewed by the author to know why they have never used the library. The Professor claimed that in addition to the fact that he is always too busy, he subscribes to several journals and he would always purchase the latest book in his field. He in fact showed me his library in his office to buttress his point.

The other two Senior Lecturers claimed that as much as they would have liked to visit the library on regular basis, the library has no private reading rooms for the faculty and they find it difficult to struggle for seats with the students. In addition it appears that materials needed in their areas of interest

are not available in the library. This further confirms the reason given on the questionnaire.

The complaint of these lecturers regarding shortage of reading spaces is a general one. The present facilities for reading are very inadequate and can hardly be enough for the students. The situation is particularly serious at the Science and Engineering libraries. However, this situation will soon come to an end when the new library building on the main campus of the university is commissioned and services resume there.

The new library has seating capacity for 800 readers and 20 carrels for private study. Indeed, the faculty is anxiously waiting for library services to commence in the new library so that it can start to utilize the facilities.

The results of the survey as revealed in Table III show that while 63.29 percent of the faculty use library books, only 45.57 percent use journals. The situation is in fact worse with the use of other library materials as follows: Newspapers 6.96 percent, Indexes 10.13 percent, Abstracts 12.03 percent, Government publication 5.06 percent and /Microfiche 1.27 percent.

Table IV shows the use of library materials in relationship to the rank of the faculty. It is indeed surprising that the level of usage of library materials apart from books is as low as discovered. It is particularly surprising that only 44.38 percent of respondents use journals in spite of the fact that between 70 - 80 percent of the books and periodicals budget is expended on periodicals alone.

Because journals are supposed to contain the latest information in the various fields of educational endeavour, one would have expected that the level of usage will be higher. However, a random interview of some of the faculty members reveal that they are not happy with the fact that the library is not receiving needed journals on regular basis. They claim that some of the journals are old and, at times, are received about two years after their publication.

It must be stated that inability to pay for journals when due has been responsible for the delay in receiving them, and this situation has been with us for some years now. Since most of our journals are foreign, it entails securing foreign exchange in order to pay for them, and this has not been easy. The result is that there are some years that we are unable to renew our subscriptions, and this has created several gaps in our holding.

In fact, whenever we secure the foreign exchange, it takes time for these journals to arrive, at times, several months after they have been published. This is due mainly to the fact that by the time we secure the needed foreign exchange and send our renewal, several issues for the particular year would have been published and our agents have to struggle to get this renewal through with the publishers. In addition, the agents have always found it difficult to track down back issues of journals already published in the year.

The situation of usage as it affects indexes and abstracts is equally surprising. Table IV shows that while Assistant Lecturers do not use indexes and ab-

stracts at all, some of the Lecturers II use only abstracts, whereas these materials should serve as invaluable sources for information on materials published on particular subjects.

A cross-tabulation of the use of indexes was done in relation to the faculty. It shows that of the 16 users, 1 is from the faculty of Arts, 2 from Education, 1 from Engineering, 4 from Science and 8(50.0%) from Health Sciences.

A random interview of the faculty reveals that the need for a conscious effort on the part of the librarians in teaching the faculty to use these materials is highly essential.

The opinion of faculty on the adequacy of library materials for their teaching and research indicates that while 31.1 percent indicated that the materials are adequate, 67.1 percent state that they are inadequate, and 1.8 percent have no opinion. One can infer that because the faculty feels that library materials are not adequate, their use of the materials as contained in tables III and IV have not been encouraging.

If this is related to the fact that only 42.2 percent of the faculty indicated that they have participated in library materials selection, while 52.8 percent have never participated before, the need to increase the involvement of the faculty on the selection of relevant titles of books and journals for acquisition will be realised.

One important service rendered by the library is the provision of photocopying service. This service is particularly important in the library as it helps in preserving materials since library users can always photocopy needed materials for home use or for use in their leisure. When this service functions well, it is likely to discourage desperate users from stealing or mutilating library books and journals since they can easily photocopy them within the library.

An analysis of the answers to this question show that 60.20% of respondents are satisfied, while the remaining 39.8 percent are dissatisfied. In any library situation attempt must be made to satisfy this group of users. One major problem of the photocopying service is the fact that it breaks down very often and its maintenance has become very prohibitive in recent times, particularly since the introduction of the Structural Adjustment Programme in Nigeria.

In order to remove this burden off the library administration, reputable photocopier dealers like Rank Xerox can be invited to instal, operate and maintain photocopy machines within the various libraries of our university. In addition to the fact that this would provide the needed services which would enhance faculty attitude toward libraries, the libraries can charge some fees thereby generating some money internally.

Ninetyfive point one percent of the faculty are of the opinion that the library staff co-operate with them when they come to make inquiries in the library. However, on the whole, the satisfaction rate of the faculty to the services rendered by the library is only 41.6 percent while 47.8 percent are not satisfied. 10.6 percent have no opinion. It is not too

cheering that only 41.6 percent of respondents are satisfied with services rendered.

In this connection, it is necessary for the library to think of how to satisfy majority of its clientele particularly the faculty, since the attitude of the faculty would affect the perception of the students. The library must think of how to improve its services, particularly in the area of materials acquisition.

CONCLUSION

Based upon this study, it would appear that 47.8 percent of the faculty at this university are not satisfied with the services rendered by the University Library. When it is realised that the attitude of the faculty could affect the attitude of the students since they rely on the faculty as sources of reference to the literature, it is important that attempt should be made by librarians to increase the satisfaction rate of the faculty to the library, particularly since reader satisfaction is the ultimate goal of library service. This suggests that several strategies for the improvement of service to the faculty should be adopted.

One of such areas should be the provision of current and up-to-date books and journals, which has been one of the suggestions offered by the faculties. In spite of the hard times and dwindling resources, libraries should ensure that their subscribed journals are received regularly. This could be done by planning ahead of time on the renewal of journal subscriptions.

In this connection, libraries must vigorously explore the possibility of utilizing Unesco coupons to pay for their overseas journals and books, since these coupons are acceptable for any overseas purchase by book dealers. The University of Ilorin Library has been vigorously pursuing this and it has been yielding good results.

Closer contact with the faculty may also be desirable for libraries to keep abreast of the faculty's current research interests. Much greater interaction between librarians and the faculty is needed. Despite budget stringency, faculty should be encouraged to request new books and serials. Ashoor¹⁰ has suggested that "the faculty member's major responsibility toward the library is in helping the library staff to build a strong collection in his area of specialization." The specialized knowledge of the faculty should enable him to decide which materials (books, journals) are needed in his field for his teaching and research.

Ashoor further asserts that faculty participation in building a good collection increases the utilization of library resources. The process of communication must be a continuing one because disciplines may change, research interests may also change and this would result in a change in the faculty information requirements.

Involvement of librarians through membership of academic committees, for example, the Faculty Boards, will enhance the communication between the library and the faculty. Librarians can use this medium to direct faculty attention to the resources of the library. There is the need for more publicity about the availability and the organization of such

resources as indexes, abstracts, government publications and microforms in the library. User awareness of these materials should be increased.

An active bibliographic instruction programme may influence faculty attitudes toward library use. This view is supported by Whitlatch¹¹ who states that "a vigorous and aggressive bibliographic instruction programme that reaches out to all students and faculty is an obvious answer to low library use". Such a programme would encourage faculty members to identify the library as a more frequent source of information on designated research topics.

Libraries should have a pleasant atmosphere where the faculty can work. Some of the suggestions made by respondents to this survey is for the provision of carrels and reserved seats for the faculty. This suggestion must be taken seriously. A situation where the faculty cannot find convenient seats to do

their work could discourage the use of the library. Libraries must therefore endeavour to provide carrels or reserved seats for the faculty.

In an educational institution, the faculty is the crucial element determining the forces operating the academic library: the courses of study, the required and supplementary reading of undergraduate students and the research projects are all directed by the faculty. It follows therefore that academic libraries must have adequate collections and collection development policies to meet the needs of the faculty.

Services that will help the faculty keep up with the literature and make use of the existing collection are desirable. User survey that will enable us establish priorities for service improvements of different user groups could be an effective tool.

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TABLE I

FACULTIES OF RESPONDENTS

FACULTIES	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
Agriculture	8	5.0	5.0
Arts	29	18.0	23.0
Business and Social Sciences	21	13.0	36.0
Education	29	18.0	54.0
Engineering and Technology	11	6.9	60.9
Health Sciences	30	18.6	79.5
Science	33	20.5	100.0
TOTAL	161	100.0	-

TABLE II
FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY USE

FREQUENCY	NUMBER RESPONDENTS	PERCENT	CUMULATIVE PERCENT
Daily	3	1.9	1.9
1-4 Times a Week	38	23.6	25.5
1-4 Times a Month	74	46.0	71.5
Rarely	43	26.6	98.1
Never	3	1.9	100.0
TOTAL	161	100.0	-

TABLE III
USE OF LIBRARY MATERIALS

LIBRARY MATERIALS	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENT
Books	100	62.1
Journals	72	44.7
Newspapers	11	6.8
Indexes	16	9.9
Abstracts	19	11.8
Government Publications	8	5.0
Microfilms/Microfiches	2	1.2

TABLE IV
USE OF LIBRARY MATERIALS IN RELATIONSHIP TO RANK

Rank	Number Of Respondents	Books	Journals	Newspapers	Indexes	Abstracts	Government Publications	Microfilms/Microfiches
Assistant Lecturer	13	11	8	3	-	-	2	1
Lecturer II	25	21	7	3	-	2	2	-
Lecturer I	43	26	18	2	3	5	3	-
Senior Lecturer	63	33	28	2	11	9	1	1
Reader	5	3	4	-	1	1	-	-
Professor	11	6	6	1	1	2	-	-
TOTAL	160 (100.0%)	100 (62.5%)	71 (44.38%)	11 (6.9%)	16 (10.0%)	19 (11.9%)	8 (5.0%)	2 (1.3%)