

Evaluation of Special Library Resources: A Case Study of Faculty of Nursing at University of Medical Sciences library, Ondo, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Every library is supposed to have adequate information resources in order to enable it effectively serve the information needs of its users. In view of this, the paper aims at assessing the resources in the Faculty of Nursing at University of Medical Sciences Library, Ondo. Survey and documentary research design was used for the study. Questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data. The total numbers of staff from the three libraries are six and copies of self designed questionnaires were distributed to the six staff only. The total number of information resources available in the library was 215 volumes. Data collected from the six respondents, who participated in this study, through the completion of questionnaires was analyzed alongside information obtained from documentary source. The study shows that available information resources in the library, do not meet the approved library standards and are not organized according to the standard of librarianship practice. The researcher recommends amongst others, the integration of library in the overall plan of the school; employment of professional librarians; provision of adequate and qualitative information resources, as some of the measures that would improve the relevance of the library resources in the library.

Keywords: Evaluation, Special Library, Resources, and Information.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is on evaluation of special library resources: a case study of faculty of nursing at university of medical sciences library, Ondo. Generally, Libraries are regarded as organs through which information is dispersed, knowledge is fetched. They occupy an important position in educational institutions, government ministries and agencies, financial institutions, companies and other specialized organizations. One way of ascertaining the strength and weakness of any type of library is to evaluate its collection and usage. Libraries are service points where information is preserved, processed and disseminated to community of users. Useful information is disbursed to the clientele in various forms and formats (printed and non-printed materials). The expectation of the community of users of the library services is usually very high. The confidence reposed by the users on these libraries make most of the users not tolerate or withstand failures from the

libraries. Therefore it is pertinent for these libraries to struggle and ensure that their collection is boosted and empowered, to be able to handle both simple and complex requests from their users positively and comprehensively. Through this technique users become satisfied and their visits to the library become constant and retained. Collection of any library is determined by the community users, special library serves the parent body, while academic, school and public library serves their community users. The special library collections are different from other type of libraries. In the case of faculty of nursing at University of Medical Sciences Library, Ondo can be called special library because of its nature.

The University is special in nature. The resources are in special area of medical lines. This is the reason the researcher regards them as special. Evaluation of the resources whether they meet operative standard is the most concern of the researchers.

Therefore, the following questions will be answered in this paper:

- Is the collection really relevant to the objectives of setting the library?
- Is the library serving the purpose of its existence?
- Are the services rendered relevant to the users needs?
- Are the library staffs assisting the users in accessing relevant and good materials?

Sometimes the collection may be relevant and very much available, but may not be serving the purpose as expected. The problem may be at the point of delivery; the library assistant may not deliver the needed materials to the users appropriately. Instead of the assistants to play the role of channels for accessing the library materials, but rather they become barrier between the library collection and the users as well as the potential users. In order to determine the extent of usage of information resources available in the library and their relevancy to the community of users, evaluation of library collection becomes necessary and very important exercise to be undertaken. It exposes the actual holdings of a given library.

According to Harande(2013) opined that the objective of the library is to maximize the exposure of the user to the resources. In addition, the library should be organized to minimize the amount of effort required to obtain access to needed bibliographic materials, and to supply such materials as soon as possible when the need for them arises. The effectiveness of any library can be evaluated in terms of how well it satisfies these objectives.” Only evaluation can bring into the notice of the stakeholders the rate of performance of the existing collection in answering queries and aiding the users to at least satisfy their immediate information needs. Evaluation of the library resources usually include activities performed in library stocktaking exercise. Using many approaches, evaluation exercise covers the entire library collection. The ability, capability, richness of the collection and easy accessibility to the entire resources of the library, attracts the user’s constant visits and prolonged patronage to the library. However, special library collection is usually different from other libraries. As the name implies, it has special collections for special group of users. The library’s objectives are positively related or associated with the objectives of the parent

institution. One can say that both the two objectives are intertwined. In other words, the library is aiding its parent institution in the achievement of its sets objectives (Harande, 2013).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Apparently, assessment of special/medical library services is pertinent to the growth of the library and its parent organization, but the question of what to assess arises. Wilson (2010) identified organization functions that could be evaluated to include:

- The way the management structure functions;
- Internal operations relating to information materials, such as cataloguing and classification, indexing;
- Library/information services to users;
- New programmes of service delivery;
- New possibilities for technological support to services and
- Alternative possibilities for doing anything

Many authors have discussed the various ways by which to measure the effectiveness of library resources and services. Ellis (1994) opines that every service provided by a library has an outcome that makes an impact on the users of that service, but measuring the value of a library service is difficult because library service outcomes are not easy to quantify. Funding bodies want to know that the money they have spent is justified, so they demand evidence. Given that many impacts of libraries are intangible, librarians have always looked for ways to measure the worth of their services. Sawyer (2006) noted that traditionally, library measures of effectiveness have been made in terms of inputs (resources/investments) and/or outputs (activities/services).

Nwalo (1997) states that, "libraries are judged by set objectives and application of set standards to measure the quantity of operations." Holtz (1993) reiterated on the importance having long or short range goals. These goals become ideally the standards for the evaluation while Sawyer opines that consistent measurement of performance indicators reveal changes overtime and provide benchmarks for comparison both internally and with other libraries or service organizations.

Ezeala (2009) and sawyer (2006) observed that library evaluation could use both qualitative and quantitative techniques. On a broader level,

evaluation often takes the form of comparing programs and performances within peer groups of institutions, because there is considerable variability even within broader groups such as academic, special, or hospital/health sciences libraries. (Sawyer, 2006; Holtz, 1993). There is however a growing concern about the best approach to be adopted by a particular institution; this problem has hindered the achievement of effective evaluation. Be that as it may, the most commonly used method is user survey; Sawyer commented that this method has been undertaken by libraries to ensure that services provided meet identified needs.

Ezeala (2009) added that irrespective of whether the evaluation is quantitative or qualitative, parameters are set to be judged by users, who are in the best position to evaluate the effectiveness of the library. Fabunmi (2004) describes effectiveness as including information customized to meet individual needs, stating that effective library systems are timely in delivery, meet their specific needs, are easy to understand/use, and are delivered by courteous and knowledgeable staff.

Problems of Library Resources Evaluation

Some authors have identified some obstacles to the conduct of successful evaluation of library services, one of such problems identified by Hernon and McClure is perceived lack of resources to support the evaluation process and on completion of the study, the unwillingness of the decision makers to implement the recommendation arising from it. Another problem noted by Holtz (1993) is lack of consistency in content and method of surveys carried out by librarians to assess their users' needs and habits; as these do not allow meaningful comparison to take place. Another problem identified by Wang et al (2006) is that many library staff does not have the skills or rewards needed to carry out assessment projects. Lack of resources and time to conduct the evaluation, fear of conducting the evaluation, and not knowing what to evaluate were also observed by the three authors.

Because of the growing awareness by librarians worldwide on the importance of assessment of library services, the number of assessment activities undertaken in libraries over the last decade has grown exponentially and this has led to the initiation of projects such as LIBQUAL+, E-metrics, TQM, and modification of SERVQUAL in libraries. (Sawyer, 2006),

however, Libqual+ and servqual evaluation tools are mostly used today as they have been effectively used to measure library service quality in both public and academic libraries.

LibQUAL+: LibQUAL+ is a suite of services that libraries use to solicit, track, understand, and act upon users' opinions of service quality. It was developed in 1999 by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). The program's centerpiece is a rigorously tested Web-based survey bundled with training that helps libraries assess and improve library services, change organizational culture, and market the library. The goals of LibQUAL+ are to: Foster a culture of excellence in providing library service, help libraries better understand user perceptions of library service quality, collect and interpret library user feedback systematically over time, provide libraries with comparable assessment information from peer institutions, identify best practices in library service and enhance library staff members' analytical skills for interpreting and acting on data.

METHODOLOGY

This type of exploratory research survey and documentary research design was found to be very relevant and therefore adopted. The instruments utilized for the research are questionnaire and personal discussion. A total number of six questionnaires were disbursed to three libraries. Therefore each library was given two copies. In response to the researcher, all the copies of the questionnaire were returned from the School of Nursing Library, School of Medical Laboratory Sciences Library and School of Midwifery Library; all were found to be useful. The total number of information resources available in the three libraries was 3,468 volumes. Data collected from the six respondents, who participated in this study, through the completion of questionnaires was analyzed alongside information obtained from documentary source. The result of the analysis was presented using percentages.

DISCUSSION OF THE EVALUATION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES ACCORDING TO THE CRITERIA

In the issue of evaluation of library materials, it is necessary for the library to make its stand known to the community of users that, it wholeheartedly supports the parent body for the betterment of the organization or agency. Van House and Childers (1993) said that," Planning

and evaluation address both internal and external needs.” They further buttress this point in their research on the evaluation of public library in (1994) that, “Internally, they help library management to set priorities, design programs and services, and allocate resources. Externally, the library has to explain its mission continually and demonstrate its value to community to justify its tax support.”

Collection

The nursing library maintains a sizeable collection which supposedly serves their users. Usually the nature of special library collection is small. This is because the library serves a particular group of people within the larger society. In this library the collection is dedicated to various aspects of nursing which is the main objective of the establishment of the institution. The collections on midwifery and medical laboratory library are few. The stronger the collection, the more the library is likely patronized. However the students as library could not afford to release information on the size of their collection. No any reason was given regarding their denial to give this vital information for the research.

Currency

On the currency of library materials the libraries have the same range. According to the users of the library, 52% from nursing and 54% from midwifery 51 from medical laboratory textbooks as confirmed the extent of the currency of the materials that constitute the collection of these libraries. This information indicates that the three libraries provide current materials and information to their clientele. One could say that the three libraries are living up to the expectation of any special library globally. The existence of current materials in these libraries further indicates that both the libraries and their parent bodies exist in peace and harmony. Special library can only exist and prosper if the parent body takes good care of the library, not only in the remunerations of the staffs but, in the growth and development of the collection as well. Generally one can say that, the materials found in these libraries are current and therefore serving the purpose of the users; as well as the parent bodies. This is because one of the aims and objectives of the parent bodies is to educate and informed their employees according to the needs of the organizations. This action likely brings about high input and effective performance by their employees.

Relevancy

In terms of relevancy of library collection of the library, a sharp difference was recorded among them, nursing, midwifery and medical laboratory textbooks. They have 85% 52% and 56% respectively. What could have been the cause of the difference? It could be attributed to the organizations commitment in making the library strong and effective. The gap could be due to the level of awareness of the users in terms of library usage. Whatever is the reason for the differences, the two libraries succeeded in housing their collections with relevant materials for their user’s consultations?

Accessibility

The users of three libraries have access to the library materials without any hindrance. Users’ accessibility to library materials clearly determines the relevancy of the materials to the community of users. Lack of accessibility indicates irrelevancy of the materials. Accessing the library materials gives an opportunity for the users to critically examine the collection, and make suggestions on how the collection can be improved. Also the users can advice the library personnel and the parent body on the best way to manage the library based on their perceptions.

Quality

On the issue of quality of the materials the expressions and feelings of the users of these library. Quality materials tell a lot about the organizations that own library. The set objectives can only be achieved when quality materials are fully utilized in the library.

However there is need to improve on the quality of the materials in the three libraries because none of them scored up to 50%. Lack of the improvement could be dangerous, and this could likely affect the nature of trainings and services offered by these institutions.

Flexibility

Here both the two groups of respondents testified that the staffs of the library are flexible and accessible without many problems. In nursing library 27% was recorded as having cordial and good relationship with the staff of the library, while a great number of users 74% expressed lack of satisfaction in their relationship with the library staff. This will definitely boost their morale in their job performances. Their relationship with library users will improve greatly.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Effectiveness of any library can be measured through evaluating the collection of that library. This approach exposes a lot of information concerning the conditions in which the library operates. Evaluations are conducted to provide several kinds of important information to libraries.” The extent of usage of these materials by the users can also be examined and determined through this method.

Faculty of Nursing at University of Medical Sciences Library, Ondo studied, could be said to have been rendering their services satisfactorily. And a greater number of the users are satisfied with these services. The materials found in these libraries are current, relevant and accessible. The only complain received is in the area of quality of the materials and flexibility of the library staff in terms of rendering assistance to the library patrons. A lot need to be done to solve these problems. However the following recommendations for improvement of the system are hereby proposed:

- Integration of library in the overall plan of the school;
- Employment of professional librarians; provision of adequate and qualitative information resources, as some of the measures that would improve the relevance of the library resources in the school at Akure campus
- On the job training of the library need to be embarked. More especially on public relations activities.
- More efforts need to be exhibited in the provision of quality materials in the collection of these libraries.

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