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AVAILABILITY AND USE OF SERIALS FOR RESEARCH BY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study investigated availability and use of serials for research by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. Four (4) objectives and corresponding research questions were raised to guide the study. The study employed a survey research design where entire population of 387 library registered postgraduate students of 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic sessions in 3 (three) universities were used for the study. A structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection which was self-developed by the researchers and validated by three experts. Data was collected by the researcher's and a response rate of 387 (100%) was recorded and used for the data analysis. Descriptive statistics of Percentages and Mean Scores were used to answer the research questions. The result of the findings revealed that although Serials were readily available for research activities, the level of currency of serials for postgraduate students was fair and extent of serials used for research activities was moderate in the universities under study. Result also revealed among others that difficulty in locating needed serials, inadequate storage facilities, journals articles not indexed for easy access and inadequate power supply, lack of awareness of serial materials and poor attitude of library staff towards users among others. Based on the result of the findings, it was concluded that serials are available in university libraries in Benue state. The study finally recommended among others that, awareness programs on available serial publications in the library should constantly be organized for students to increase the level of awareness of information provision in the library and postgraduate students should be encouraged to use serial publications for research work as well as other academic purposes.

Keywords: Availability, Use, Serials, Research, Postgraduate Students, University Libraries.

Introduction

Academic libraries are those libraries established, owned and funded by institutions of higher learning, that is, university libraries, polytechnic libraries, colleges of education libraries and colleges of agriculture libraries. As integral part of their parent institutions, they design their collections and services to meet the institutional programme of the institution (Attama, 2013). The primary aims and objectives of academic libraries is to offer its users that is, students, academic staff and other members of the university community the academic, learning and research services in support of the programmes of the parent institution. The Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, (2013) defined serial as a publication in any medium issued in successive parts, bearing numeric or chronological designations and intended to be continued indefinitely. Serials include: periodicals, newspapers, annuals, journals, proceedings, memoirs, transactions among others. They are categorized into periodicals and non-periodicals based on intended frequency of publication.

Universities are involved in teaching, research and publication. All over the world, according to Akintayo and Oghenekohwo in Akinbode and Nwalo (2017) university education has attracted significant interest as it serves as the only way of ensuring immediate changes and transformation in human and technological advancement. One of the preoccupations of university is research. Research, as pointed out by Ntiamoah and Maidu in Akinbode and Nwalo (2017) is the engine that generates new knowledge and provides ideas for national development. The outcome of research is usually published for people to access to solve societal issues.

Serial publications are intervening concepts which are very complex. Thus, serials are print and non-print publications issued in parts, usually bearing issue numbers, issue dates, or both. Serials are expected to continue indefinitely. Serials include magazines, newsletters, newspapers, annuals (such as reports, yearbooks, and directories), journals, memoirs, proceedings, transactions of societies and numbered series (Nwalo, 2003). The information contained in serials is factual, current and up-to-date which are relevant for research.

On the availability of serial publications, Oriogu, Oluwatola, Ogbuiyi, and Oguiyi (2015) are of the opinion that scholarly journals in academic libraries are essential to students' research development in the academic institution. It is tantamount to their academic growth and success. It is an effective and efficient primary source for good research. Serials are important type of information resources because they contain up-to-date, cutting edge information on any subject discipline. They are primary sources of information because, information published in them are mostly products of investigation or research. The information contained in them are more precise and detailed than those contained in textbooks. The study among other issues discusses the availability of serials in university libraries. The availability of information resources requires the users to have the ability to identify what resources that is available and current for maximum utilization. The study also discusses the currency of serials from 1997-2017 in the university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. University libraries are established to adequately serve the diverse information needs of her clientele. As a result, the information contained in the library are ought to be current in order to meet information needs of the postgraduate student users. The use of serials by postgraduate students is expected to improve their academic research standard. As a result, serial sections of university libraries in Benue state are expected to provide current and up-to-date information resources including journals, newspapers, newsletters, year books, magazines to postgraduate students in support of their research activities. These serials if they are current, relevant and up-to-date,

its usage by postgraduate students for research can be inevitable for quality research output in universities in Benue State, Nigeria. It is against this background that this present study sought to find out the availability and use of serials for research by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue state, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, universities have started paying greater attention to research. Universities do this by developing appropriate policies, making funds and facilities available for research, and encouraging their staff in the collection development department to acquire and process for use current, adequate and relevant serial publications for use in the University Libraries. In many postgraduate programmes at universities, students are required to carry out a research project and submit a report as a pre-requisite for completing their degree. Hence the university libraries are expected to provide resources for the students. Despite the colossal amount of the resources usually committed to serials in university libraries in Benue State, the use of the section for research is not encouraging as witness by the researchers. Most often times, the quality of research output by postgraduate students is not good enough as observed by some lecturers, design and content readers during proposal and exit seminar defense. This could be as a result of non-currency of serials in the University libraries for postgraduate student's research. It could also be as a result of inadequate availability of serials in the library which could negatively affect the quality of their research output. If this scenario is not properly addressed the aims and objectives of postgraduate education in these universities could be defeated. Also, it will also affect the quality of research conducted by the postgraduates in the universities. Therefore, the study sought to finds out the availability and use of serials for research by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to determine the availability and use of serials for research by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the availability of serials for postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue state, Nigeria.
2. Determine the currency of serials for postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue state, Nigeria.
3. Ascertain the extent to which serials are used by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue state, Nigeria.
4. Identify the challenges that affect the use of serials by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the available serials for postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria?
2. What is the level of currency of serials for postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria?
3. To what extent are serials used by postgraduate students for research in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria?
4. What are the challenges that affect the use of serials by postgraduate students for research in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria?

Scope of the Study

The study covers availability, currency, use and challenges of serials for research by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State. The target population for this study is registered library postgraduate students from 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic sessions. The study is limited to library registered postgraduate students in three (3) university libraries in Benue State which are: University of Agriculture Makurdi (UAM), Benue State University (BSU), Makurdi and University of Mkar, Mkar.

Review of Related Literature

Ogunniyi, Akerele and Afolabi (2001) studied the use of serial publications by academic staff of the School of Art and Social Sciences in Adeyemi College of Education Ondo State, Nigeria. The result revealed that most academic staff in the college did not use the serial section of the library due to lack of current and inadequate journals, poor arrangement and inaccessibility; preference of electronic journals to printed copies as well as lack of professionals to manage the serial section. It was recommended among others that funding, involvement of lecturers in the selection of relevant serials, indexing of serials and compiling of recent serials should be provided.

Kumbar, Hadagali, Gururaj and Seema (2007) studied the use of periodical literature by Agriculture Scientists in University of Agricultural Sciences, Daharwad, India. The result revealed that respondents scanned current issues of journals of latest developments, print journals were considered to be better than electronic journals.

Akinbode (2011), studied the influence of serial management, practices and use in libraries on publications output of lecturers in Nigerian Universities. The result revealed that inadequate funding, high foreign exchange rate, inflation, poor attitude of users, inadequate facilities, lack of staff, non-availability of current serials, poor lighting, inaccessibility of available issues and insufficient number of copies influenced serial management, practices and use in libraries on publications output of lecturers in Nigerian Universities.

Ufuoma, Akpojotor, Okonoko and Aworo (2015) studied user's utilization of newspaper media in Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Efurun, Delta State. The result revealed that library users consulted more than 5 different types of newspapers daily in order to solve information needs.

Methodology

The study adopted survey method of research design. The study was conducted in Benue State North Central, Nigeria. Specifically, the study was carried out in three universities namely: Federal University of Agriculture Makurdi, Benue State University Makurdi and University of Mkar, Mkar. The population for this study comprised all library registered postgraduate students of 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 academic sessions in three (3) universities as it has been breaking down: University of Agriculture, Makurdi (UAM, 176), Benue State University (BSU, 181) and University of Mkar, Mkar (UMM, 30). (Office of the university librarians, UAM, BSU and UMM). A structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Face and content validity were carried out to ascertain if the instrument would be able to measure what it was designed to measure. To ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire for this study, thirty (30) postgraduate students who were not part of the main study but have the same characteristics with the students under study were trial tested at Nasarawa State University, Keffi. Cronbach Alpha method was used to

determine internal consistency and the analysis yielded a Cronbach Coefficient Alpha of 0.80. Copies of the questionnaire were administered and collected on the spot through direct contact by the researchers. A total of 387 copies of questionnaire were distributed and 387 (100%) copies were duly completed, returned and used for data analysis. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics of percentages, mean scores ($\overline{X}$) and standard deviation (SD) were used to answer research questions. Items with percentages ranging from 50% and above were regarded as Available and in use (AU) while items with percentages ranging from 49% and below were regarded as Not Available (NA). The average of the responses on a 4-point response option was 2.50. Any mean that rank from 2.50 and above was agreed, whereas 2.49 was disagreed.

Data Analysis

This section is concerned with data presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of findings. The results are presented and analyzed based on the research questions.

Research Question 1: What are the available serials for postgraduate student in university library in Benue state, Nigeria?

Table 1: Percentage responses on available serials in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria

S/N	Item/Serials	Available %	Not Available %	Remarks
A	**Periodicals**			
1	Journals	344 (88.2%)	46 (11.8%)	Available
2	Newspapers	349 (89.5%)	41 (10.5%)	Available
3	Magazine	363 (93.1%)	27 (6.9%)	Available
B	**Non- Periodicals**			
4	Transaction and Memoires of Society	347 (89.0%)	43 (11.0%)	Available
5	News Letter	372 (95.4%)	18 (4.6%)	Available
6	Annuals	381 (97.7%)	9 (2.3%)	Available
7	Proceedings	355 (91.0%)	35 (9.0%)	Available
8	Numbered monographic series	316 (81.0%)	74 (19.0%)	Available
9	Bulletins	327 (83.8%)	63 (16.2%)	Available
10	Series computer Database	352 (90.3%)	38 (9.7)	Available
11	Report	355 (91.0%)	35 (9.0%)	Available
	Total	**(90%)**	**(10%)**	**Available**

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Table 1 reveals that all the serials listed are available with percentages ranging from 81.0-97.7% while non-available are with percentages ranging from 2.3-11.8%. The table clearly indicates that serials are available with 90% availability and 10% non-availability.

Research Questions 2: What is the level of currency of serials for postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue state, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation responses on currency of serials in university libraries for postgraduate students

S/N	Item/Serials	Mean	S. Deviation	Remarks
A	**Periodicals**			
1	Journals	3.72	.69	Very Current
2	Newspapers	3.79	.55	Very Current
3	Magazine	3.72	.44	Very Current
B	**Non- Periodicals**			
4	Transaction and Memoires of Society	2.35	.87	Fairly current
5	News Letter	2.28	.82	Fairly current
6	Annuals	2.19	.84	Fairly current
7	Proceedings	2.10	.86	Fairly current
8	Numbered monographic series	2.15	.91	Fairly current
9	Bulletins	2.13	.90	Fairly current
10	Series computer Database	2.33	.83	Fairly current
11	Report	2.27	.94	Fairly current
	Cluster Mean	**2.69**	**0.78**	**Fairly current**

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Table 2 indicates that all the periodicals are very current with mean ranging between 3.72-3.79 with SD=0.44-0.69. In the case of non-periodicals, their level of currency was fair with ẍ ranges from 2.10-2.35 and SD=0.82-0.94. However, the periodicals are fairly current with cluster mean of 2.69 and SD of 0.78. This shows that all the periodicals are very current while non-periodicals are fairly current.

Research Question 3: To what Extent are Serials used by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue state, Nigeria?

Table 3: showing Mean and Standard Deviation responses on Extent of Usage Serials by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue state, Nigeria.

S/N	Item/Serials	Mean	S. Deviation	Remarks
A	**Periodicals**			
1	Journals	3.54	.78	Great Extent
2	Newspapers	3.79	.46	Great Extent
3	Magazine	3.54	.65	Great Extent
B	**Non- Periodicals**			
4	Transaction and Memoires of Society	2.65	.86	Great Extent
5	News Letter	2.35	.68	Moderate Extent
6	Annuals	2.42	.75	Moderate Extent
7	Proceedings	2.23	.56	Moderate Extent
8	Numbered monographic series	2.44	.75	Moderate Extent
9	Bulletins	2.21	.50	Moderate Extent
10	Series computer Database	2.28	.59	Moderate Extent
11	Report	2.35	.67	Moderate Extent
	Cluster Mean	**2.70**	**0.65**	**Moderate Extent**

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Table 3 reveals that all the periodicals are greatly used with means values ranging from 3.54-3.79 with SD=0.46-0.78. However, only one one-periodical is greatly used with a mean of 2.65 and SD=0.86. All other non-periodicals are moderately used with mean ranging from 2.21-2.44 and SD=50-75. The table reveals that serials are moderately used.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges that affect the use of serial by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue state, Nigeria?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation responses on Challenges of serial Usage by Postgraduate Students in university libraries in Benue state, Nigeria.

S/N	Item/Serials	Mean	S. Deviation	Remarks
1	Lack of current serials	2.12	.87	Disagree
2	Inadequate manpower to provide effective services	2.93	.93	Agreed
3	Journals articles not indexed for easy access	3.16	.64	Agreed
4	Inadequate storage facilities	3.18	.53	Agreed
5	Serials are not properly organized for easy access	2.86	.92	Agreed
6	Lack of awareness of serial materials	3.12	.68	Agreed
7	Difficulty in the use of catalogue	3.00	.56	Agreed
8	Inadequate budgetary allocation and foreign exchange rate for serials acquisition	3.00	.68	Agreed
9	Difficulty in locating the needed serials	3.21	.59	Agreed
10	Lack of internet service	3.07	.58	Agreed
11	Inadequate power supply	3.16	.56	Agreed
12	Poor attitude of staff towards service to users	3.12	.61	Agreed
	Cluster Mean	**2.99**	**0.67**	**Agreed**

Source: Field Survey, 2019.

Table 4 reveals the mean ($\overline{X}$) and standard deviation (S.D) responses on challenges of serial Usage by Postgraduate Students having $\overline{X}$ ranges from 2.12 to 3.18 and S.D = 0.53 to 0.93. The cluster $\overline{X}$ = 2.99 and S.D of 0.67, the result indicates that postgraduate students are faced with Challenges in using serial.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings of the study, the following were discussed:

The results of the finding as shown in table 1 revealed the availability of serials in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. These includes: Journals, Newspapers, Magazines, Newsletters, Annuals, Bulletins Indexes, Abstracts, Report, Proceedings, Numbered Monographic Series, Series Computer Database, Transactions and Memoires of Society are some of the serials that are available in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. The findings of this study agree with the findings of Ogunniyi, Akerele and Afolabi (2011) that journals are accorded prominence in the library because they provide the latest information and if users want to be current in their field, they have to read relevant journals.

From the findings of the study as depicted in table 2, it is very clear that serials such as journals, newspapers and magazines are very current while transaction and memoires of society, newsletter, annuals, proceedings, numbered monographic series, bulletins, series computer databases and report are fairly current. The fairly current of the result is quite unexpected because of the importance of serials to research for postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State. The findings of this study is in line with Kumbar et al (2007) who report found out that agricultural scientist

scanned current issues of journals of latest developments and that print journals were considered to be better than electronic journals.

The findings of this study in table 3 revealed that serial resources such as Journals, Newspapers and magazines were used to a great extent while transaction and memoires of society, newsletter, annuals, proceedings, numbered monographic series, bulletins, series computer database and report are used to moderate extent for research activities by postgraduate students in University libraries in Benue State. The findings agree with Ufuoma et al. (2015) that periodicals are used to a great extent, that users consulted more than 5 different types of newspaper's daily in order to solve information needs.

From table 4 shows the challenges that affect the use of serials by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State, Nigeria. Findings show that, Inadequate manpower to provide effective services, journal article not indexed to ease access, inadequate storage facilities, serials are not properly organized for easy access, lack of awareness of serial materials, difficulty in the use of catalogue, inadequate budgetary allocation and foreign exchange rate for serials acquisition., difficulty in locating the needed serials, lack of internet services, inadequate power supply and poor attitudes of staff towards services to users were the challenging factors affecting the use of serial publications by postgraduate students in University libraries in Benue state. The findings of this study agree with Akinbode (2011) who affirms that inadequate funding, high foreign exchange rate, inflation, poor attitude of users inadequate facilities, lack of staff, non-availability of current serials poor lighting, inaccessibility of available issues and insufficient number of copies were some of the challenges that affect serials usage

Conclusion

Based on the result of the findings, it was concluded that serials are available in university libraries in Benue state. It is very clear that serials such as journals, newspapers and magazines are very current while transaction and memoires of society, newsletter, annuals, proceedings, numbered monographic series, bulletins, series computer databases and report are fairly current. Serial resources such as journals, newspapers and magazines were used to a great extent while transaction and memoires of society, newsletter, annuals, proceedings, numbered monographic series, bulletins, series computer database and report are used to moderate extent for research activities by postgraduate students in university libraries in Benue State. The study revealed challenging factors that affect the use of serials such as inadequate manpower to provide effective services, journal article not indexed to ease access, inadequate storage facilities among others.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

i. Awareness programs on available serial publications in the library should constantly be organized for students to increase the level of awareness of information provision in the library. This would further enhance the extent of students' use of serial publications.
ii. Postgraduate students should be encouraged to use serial publications for research work and other academic purposes since the universities under study have the capacity to provide serial publications.
iii. Provision of current serial publications to meet the information needs of postgraduate students to facilitate research should be given proper attention by library administrators.

iv. University libraries management in Benue State should ensure that all necessary serial resources that enhance high level utilization that will lead to quality research output by postgraduate students are adequately provided in the university libraries in Benue State.

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