

MAXIMIZING RESOURCES TO MEET USER EXPECTATIONS: THE CASE OF
NAVRONGO CAMPUS LIBRARY IN PROMOTING TEACHING, LEARNING AND
RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

By

Joana A. Pwadura and Ransford S. Baidoo
University for Development Studies
P.O. Box 24
Navrongo

jopwadura@yahoo.co.uk, ransfordbaidoo@hotmail.com

Abstract

This paper examines the trend in disciplinary differences in the use of the Navrongo Library by academic staff and students, and assesses whether the library services need to differentiate between staff and students when planning support services. The research methodology tools used include an in-depth questionnaire which examines patterns in academic staff patronage of the library and its services, including a cross-sectional, random personal interview with students, particularly, final years and postgraduate students at all levels. Questionnaires were distributed to 75 academic staff (in-depth study) and 150 students (random cross sectional survey). Results indicate that most academic staff incorporate digital sources (Internet, e-journals, CD-ROMs etc) and personal materials into their working patterns in different ways. The study also indicates similar patterns for students. The paper then recommends the implementation and development of support services such as institutional repositories, electronic support services, virtual learning environments, etc) which can be explored to meet user expectations of the Navrongo Campus Library.

Keywords: *academic staff, digital sources, support services, institutional repositories, user expectations.*

INTRODUCTION

The traditional role of the university library is to develop a well organised collection to support teaching, learning and research but this is being challenged today with the advent of ICT. The challenge for academic libraries is even greater as they deal with a more sophisticated clientele in an ever changing environment. Users have many resources available to them on the Internet and other electronic resources that provide faster and easier ways of searching for, and use of information. Academic libraries therefore need to rise up to this challenge if they have to remain

relevant to the vision and mission of their mother institutions. Whiles one school of thought thinks that libraries need to modernize and make resources easier to find and use if they expect to keep up with other information agencies and resources, the other assumes that the efficient use of a library's personnel resources results in maximizing of library usage (Alemna 1999).

The types of resources available in a library are very essential for the effective achievement of its set objectives. In Ghana, academic libraries such as the University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Universities of Cape Coast, and Mines and Technology have transformed their collections from print only to include electronic resources. Through government funding, consortia building or donor funds, Cyber infrastructure have been implemented to aid digital information seeking by their users via tools such as direct access from the online Public Access Catalogue (OCLC). They have also employed various evaluative approaches as in Ahenkorah-Marfo and Teye (2009), Badu (2009) and Buer (2009) to promote, improve and deliver quality services to their numerous clientele.

The Navrongo Campus Library (NCL) is one of the four multi-campus libraries of the University for Development Studies (UDS) which was established in Northern Ghana on 15th May, 1992 by then PNDC government (Bening, 2005). It is located in the Kasena Nankana Municipality of the Upper East Region of Ghana and serves two main faculties – the Faculty of Applied Sciences (FAS) and the Faculty of Mathematical Sciences (FMS) in support of teaching, learning research and knowledge dissemination. The library stocks books and other materials to cover the various disciplines such as; Applied biology, Chemistry, Physics, Mathematics, Statistics and Earth and Environmental Sciences.

Since 2004, electronic resources such as CD-ROMs and online databases were introduced to improve the collection. Again, in 2011 the library was automated through TALIF funding to further improve on services and resources. How effectively these resources are utilized by both faculty and students, whether the acquisition or improvement of resources meet the expectations of users is not known. In order that the reasons for which these resources were acquired by the University Library are justified, the expectations of members of the faculties and students (who are the ultimate beneficiaries in their teaching, research and knowledge dissemination activities) must be met. Therefore, this study seeks to add to knowledge by the investigation of how resources are acquired and utilized in the Navrongo Campus Library, and to open up areas for further investigations.

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this paper is to highlight the types of resources and support services available in the NCL and how these are utilized and also to ascertain whether there is the need to differentiate between staff and students when planning support services.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

To highlight the type of support offered by the NCL to its clientele; evaluate clientele expectations in terms of service delivery; elicit the extent to which disciplinary difference is reflected in the use of resources; identify areas that can be explored to meet user expectations and to maximize the use of its resources; identify challenges with service delivery and make recommendations for effective use of the library.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Expectations are anticipated satisfaction based on the standards that the performance of a product or service is judged by its users (Ijirigho, 2009). Library users have their expectations of the service rendered from the library especially in the changing information paradigm where information resources are relatively abundant and user expectations regarding search and access to information have changed (Dempsey, 2006). The appearance of the Internet and large consolidated resources in the form of search engines provides users with options, choices and alternatives of accessing information.

Challenges of Academic Libraries

Academic libraries provide resources to cover various disciplines. Academic library users also have varying needs and expectations. To what extent then are user needs met?

Echezona and Ugwuanyi (2010) put it succinctly that university libraries in many African countries have faced a difficult decade, with rapid erosion of funding for books and journals, staffing difficulties and perhaps a loss of the perception of the library as the centre of academic scholarship. The Association of African Universities (AAU, 2005) adds that access to excellent Internet connectivity and adequate Internet bandwidth presents a great challenge for university management. Whereas Agyen-Gyasi, Lamptey & Frempong (2011) assert that these challenges have stimulated academic libraries in Ghana new thinking and approaches to maximize the use of available resources under difficult conditions.

The expansion of the world wide web, widespread ownership of personal computers On one hand and the rising computer literacy on the other, have created an era of tremendous challenges to libraries as information providers (Calhoun, 2006). Consequently, Academic libraries as information providers and intermediaries in the teaching, learning and research activities of their parent institutions are facing two major threats: a global digital environment and increasing competition. They must improve the quality of their services in order to survive (Cullen, 2001). Agyen-Gyasi et al (2011) emphasized that the challenges facing academic libraries in Ghana result from both dynamic changes in the higher education sector and the nature of students all of which put together have exerted pressure upon the traditional role of the academic library today to change from print only to include electronic resources.

RESOURCES OF THE NCL

The library as the nerve center of educational institutions is entrusted with the acquisition, organisation, preservation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information in whatever format it might appear. In addition to books, print journals and other materials it also has an Electronic Support Unit (ESU) responsible for extending the basic services of the Library into digital formats. Its integrated automated system is envisaged to make services such as cataloguing and circulation of materials fast and easy. The protection of library materials is ensured with the adoption of a security system that detects attempted theft. In 2004 the library, being a member of the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries (CALIGH), benefited from subscription to a number of electronic information resources (online databases)) which is a comprehensive tool designed to support academic and faculty research. The library serves students, academic and administrative staff of the University.

Challenges of the Navrongo Campus Library (NCL)

Despite the progressive strides made the NCL has challenges hindering smooth service delivery: Funding, Internet inaccessibility as well as frequent power outages are some of the challenges confronting it.

Funding

Literature abounds with “Library Funding Issues” but Alemna (1994) has indicated that it is incontrovertible that every good collection is an expression of adequate and sound financial backing, and no collection development can achieve this objective if it is financially handicapped. The cost of materials and equipment along with increased demands for library services puts a severe strain on library budgets. The Librarians job of choosing the best available materials and the most useful services for a library thus becomes difficult. In the case of UDS ten percent of the Academic Facility User Fee (AFUF) is made available to the library as funding. As a multi-campus university, this amount is centrally disbursed by the Main Library which tries to meet the needs of the satellite libraries. This trickling down of resources is not adequate and needs to be:

- a) adjusted upward to allow the constant upgrading of facilities and resources and
- b) campus libraries need financial resourcing for the day to day management of the libraries.

As Moore and Shander (1993) have observed, library funding will probably be the issue which consumes the energy of library managers to the end of this century and the next.

Internet Connectivity, Power and Bandwidth Issues

The Internet is the largest repository of knowledge and its use for information is hampered by erratic power supply, inadequate Internet connectivity or low bandwidth allocation in the

Navrongo Campus Library.(Wikis, 2012) defines bandwidth as the rate of data transfer, which is the capacity of the Internet connection being used to access information. The University library subscribes to online and electronic journals which undoubtedly require sufficient bandwidth to practically and usefully retrieve information for its users. Without access to Internet the use of such extensive collections of online content becomes virtually absent in the library. Supply of electricity power is an extraneous factor that challenges the work of the library. Constant electricity is needed day and night to provide the above services but in the NCL the erratic nature of power supply hampers service delivery.

Capacity building

The NCL has a blend of skills; professional and non professional. Practically, services are rendered by a few skilled staff. With faculty and student numbers growing the human resource base and capacities of staff have to be constantly improved (Nwosu 2000). Also with the recent advances in technologies and mechanisms with which service delivery is implemented, Olalude (2007) reaffirms that for African information professionals to remain relevant and meet the needs of their patrons, they must possess adequate knowledge and mastery of Internet facilities as tools for accessing current information.

Methodology

Copies of a Semi-structured questionnaire were administered to 75 academic staff and 150 students by the researchers. However, 55 out of 75 academic staff returned completed questionnaires while 120 out of 150 were completed by the student respondents thereby giving 175 total valid samples. An in-depth face to face interview with lecturers and students that spanned a period of ten days from 6th – 16th November 2011 was also employed together with

observations on their use of the library. Thus, the research sought to elicit views of regular, occasional and intermediate users of the library on its resources and services offered to support academic and research work.

OBSERVATION AND DISCUSSION

Availability of resources and user expectations

During the interview sessions with lecturers and students, it came to light that both groups use the library's books and print journals for information. Lecturers also access electronic and online resources provided by the library from their PCs. Also, many students by observation make use of the library materials and complement their readings with lecture notes or handouts prepared for them by their lecturers. Other students use the library more during examination periods for study. Lecturers and students from the Physics Department also bemoan inadequacies in the collections. Mindful of this, the library augments the print collections with a wide range of online databases which can be accessed anytime anywhere. Users have noted with appreciation the work of the Electronic Support Unit (ESU) and the recently incorporation of an automated Library Integrated Software (LIS) into its operations to improve services and resources of the library however, the general view is that internet accessibility is a major threat to the use of electronic resources of the library. The Table below shows the current book collection in the various disciplines.

Table 1: distribution of books by subject

DEPARTMENT	NUMBER OF BOOKS
Applied Biology	716
Applied Chemistry	1300
Applied Physics	250
Mathematics and Statistics	2105
Earth and Environmental Sciences	519
Technology/Medicine	230
Others	880

Source: Field Survey, 2011

As a large department with huge student size, the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science staff and students are high volume users of library materials. Therefore, strategic access to a wide range of valid and real world result should concern them. Other departments such as the Applied Biology, Applied Chemistry and the Earth and Environmental Sciences, are also significantly large, requiring critical consideration since they also greatly contribute to effective and routine library material consultation.

Knowledge/ awareness and expectations

Respondents were asked about their knowledge of the library and its resources. Results suggest that 18 out of 55 representing 32.5% of academic staff and 81 out of 120 representing 67.5% of the students have general knowledge about the library services and regulations. These include key issues such as working hours of the library, availability of digital media (such as compact disk read-only memory – CDROM) and the use of the electronic resources and online databases in the library. This indicates that a considerable number of users are aware of the library and the types of resources and services available to them.

User Education and Expectation

In collaboration with the two faculties, the Navrongo Campus Library organises Orientation for fresh men and women every year to introduce them to the libraries resources. Results suggest degrees of helpfulness. While 23 representing 19% of student respondents indicated that the LOP is very helpful, 46 (38%) said helpful and a majority of 51 being 42.5% said not helpful. Even though 57.5% respondents commended the library's user education efforts majority of respondents 105 representing 87.5% have suggested intensified user education efforts such as; a compulsory 'Library Instructional Course' for all categories of students on the Navrongo Campus and "faculty only" and "students only" training workshops on the use of online database as well as information searching techniques. Norlin (2004) made a tacit observation that, unless librarians consciously view the faculty and students as the primary target for their activities, they would become irrelevant to students, faculty, administrators and institutions.

Library patronage

The University library is accessible to all its users. However, usage of the library varies according to availability of resources and user needs. For purposes of this study users were identified as Active, Intermediate and Passive respondents.

Table 2: Respondents’ patronage of the Library

Respondents	Academic category				Total	%
	AS	%	ST	%		
Active Library users	15	27%	59	49%	74	42.3%
Intermediate Library users	33	60%	43	36%	76	43.4%
Passive Library users	7	12%	18	15%	25	14.3%
Subtotal	55		120		175	100%

Key:

AS = Academic Staff

ST = Student

Results indicate that 74 out of 175 total respondents (academic staff and students) representing 42% are “Active Library Users” (ALU) against 76 (43%) “Intermediate Library Users” (ILUs). The latter group uses the library occasionally for one need or the other while the former use it regularly to access various resources for information and study. Again, most academic staff 33(60%) who are ILUs access the library once or twice in an academic year to borrow books and other materials to prepare their lecture notes. Indeed unlike students, academic staffs do not use the library for study purposes which is the case for the 43 or 36% student respondents who find the library’s environment conducive for study during examinations. Twenty five (25) “Passive Library Users” (PLUs) representing 14% are those who once in a while come in the library and

may find something motivating. Forty-three (43) representing 60% of intermediate users of academic staff claim that the library often fails to buy recommended books/titles for research and academic purposes. They indicated that they explore alternative avenues such as the Internet (for journals, articles, etc) and the repositories of other tertiary institutions. In some circumstances, they buy books and other materials that they need. However, a cursory look at the Library's collection reveals the complementary role it plays in the provision of relevant books and other resources for consultation in accordance with the Acquisitions Policy of the University. However, going by the results it can be deduced that the NCL enjoys good patronage. Nevertheless, concerns of students and faculty need to be carefully attuned to.

User satisfaction

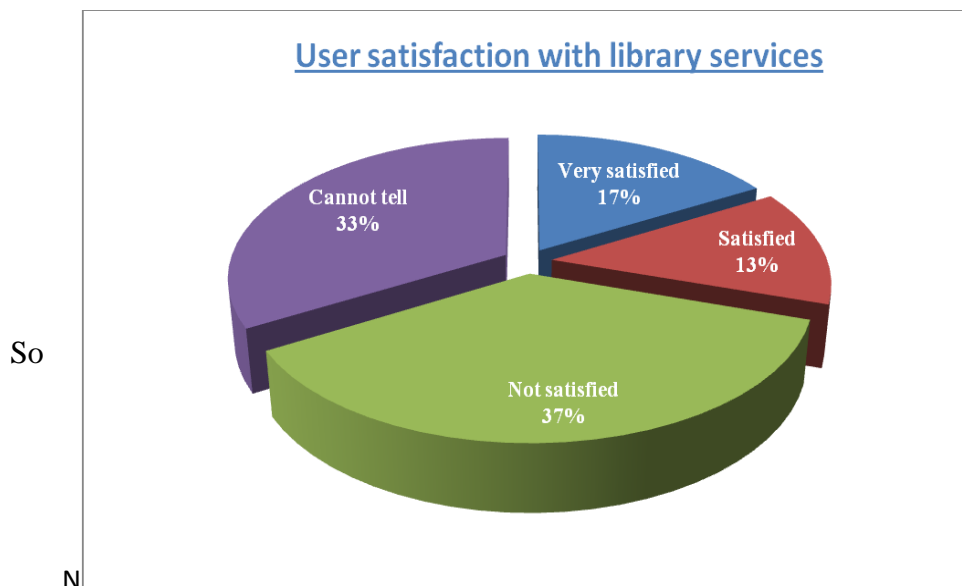
Hernon and Altman (1998) emphasised in their study that quality service is a competitive necessity for businesses and service organisations, and therefore, assessing service quality is the first step in retaining customers in today's competitive environment. Respondents find the operating hours of the library (8.30am to 10.00pm week days and 9.am-5pm on Saturdays) not in their favour especially, during examination periods, where most of them rely heavily on the Library for quiet time to study.

Also, 64 being 37% users were not satisfied with the limited access to electronic information resources making them heavily reliant on printed resources, which they perceive as being difficult to browse. Understandably, accessibility to electronic resources is dependent on other factors such as dedicated Internet connectivity and power supplies which are challenges confronting not only the library but the entire university community. The results indicate that

users are getting sophisticated because they are open to a variety of alternative channels of information delivery, many of which are more convenient and can compete on cost. So they can easily be dissatisfied with services that do not meet their needs. It is not surprising therefore that the combined groups of “very satisfied” and “satisfied” represent only 30%.

The need to prioritize its services to meet user needs and expectations to the highest degree has always been the library’s main agenda. Therefore, the above concerns when addressed, will eventually not only improve the quality of services and resources of the Library but also raise the satisfaction levels of users thereby enhancing user perception of the library as the engine for knowledge acquisition and expansion. Figure 1 below is a summary of user satisfaction of the NCLs resources and services.

Figure 1: Summary of library user satisfaction indicator



Source: Field Survey, 2011

CONCLUSION

It is unquestionable that the role of the NCL as information intermediary would never change. The study has given valuable information about the NCL and its resources and the challenges facing it. Faculty and students overall perception and knowledge about library and regulations are encouraging. Patronage and satisfaction levels are good. However, results indicate that users (academic staff and students) incorporate digital resources such as Internet, e-journals, CD-ROMs and personal materials into their working patterns. The study also showed that user education programs are needed more by student users.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The fact that both faculty and students use the library for their information needs is an indication that they understand the pivotal role the library plays in furthering the mission and vision of the University. Recommendations were therefore made as follows: acquisition of relevant books which both faculty and students would use; the NCL should be empowered logistically, financially and technically to subscribe to more e-journals and other web resources, for easy access by both academic staff and students to facilitate academic work; the library to incorporate “Library instruction courses” to be taught in class in collaboration with the various departments; workshops and seminars on information retrieval and internet searches be organised for both students and faculty as well as implement and develop support services such as institutional repositories, virtual learning environments to enhance resources and services of the NCL in meeting user expectations.

REFERENCES

- AAU (2005). "IDRC: A decade of ICT for development investment in Africa". **AAU Newsletter** , Vol. 11, Issue 3, pp. 13-14.
- Agyen-Gyasi, K., Lamptey, R. & Frempong, A. (2011). **Academic librarians' role in maximizing library use in Ghana**. University Library, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology. Kumasi, Ghana. pp. 2- 4.
- Ahenkorah-Marfo, M and Teye, V. (2009). "From user education to information literacy: the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science Technology Library's experience". **Ghana Library Journal**, Vol.21. Nos.1&2. pp.102-119.
- Alemna A. A. (1994). **Libraries and information provision in Ghana**. Accra. Type Co. Ltd. p.81.
- Alemna (1999). "Library evaluation: some options for academic libraries". **Aslib Proceedings**, Vol. 51 Iss.7 pp. 243-246.
- Badu, E. E. (2009). "Performance measurement in academic libraries in Ghana". **Ghana Library Journal**, Vol. 21. Nos.1&2. pp. 40-57.
- Bening, R. B. (2005). "University for Development Studies in the history of higher education in Ghana". Accra, Ghana. **Centre for Savana Art and Civilisation**. p.51.
- Buer, V. B. (2009). "Awareness and use of electronic resources at a university in Ghana". **Ghana Library Journal**, Vol.21. Nos.1&2. pp.120-135.
- Calhoun, K. (2006). "The changing nature of the catalog and its integration with other discovery tools". *Prepared for the Library of Congress*. Available from: www.loc.gov/catdir/calhoun-report-final.pdf (Accessed May 22, 2010; 10:27am)
- Cullen, R (2001). "Perspectives on user satisfaction surveys". **Library Trends**, Vol. 49, No. 4, Spring 2001, p. 662.

- Dempsey, L. (2006). "The library catalogue in the new discovery environment: some thoughts". **Ariadne**, 48. Available from: <<http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue48/dempsey/>> (Accessed May 21, 2012; 10:50am)
- Hernon, P., & Altman, E (1998). "**Assessing service quality: satisfying the expectations of library customers**". Chicago. American library Association. p. 51.
- Ijirigho, M. A (2009). "Faculty expectations of libraries: a comparative study of Covenant University and University of Lagos Library: Library Philosophy and Practice". Available: <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/~mbolin/pp.htm>. (Accessed May 21, 2012; 7.50pm)
- Moore, D. & Shander, D. E. (1993). "Towards 2001: an examination of the present and future roles of libraries in relation to economic and social trend". **Journal of Library Administration**. Vol. 19, No. 2, p. 19.
- Norlin, D. A. (2004). "ATLA staff news: serving ATLA members and customers". **American Theological Library Association Newsletter**, No. 51, Vol. 3, pp. 55-56.
- Nwosu, C. (2000). **A textbook in use of the library for higher education**. Owerri : Springfield Publishers. p 103.
- Olalude, F.O. (2007). "Utilization of Internet sources for research by information professionals in sub-Saharan Africa". **African Journal of Library, Archive, and Information Science**, Vol.17, No. 1, pp. 53-58.
- Echezona, R. I and Ugwuanyi, C. F. (2010). "African University Libraries and Internet connectivity: challenges and the way forward". **Library Philosophy and practice (e-journal)**. Paper 421/<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/421>.
- Wikis (2012) (<http://www.wikis.com>, accessed on Tues. 27/03/2012, 8.23pm)