INFORMATION NEEDS AND SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG UNDERGRADUATES IN UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR LIBRARY NIGERIA

CATHERINE OBI ELEMI (PhD)
Technical department
Unicross library
elemikate@gmail.com
+2348038304438

AJIGO JOSEPHINE OBLA (PhD)
College Library
Cross River state College of
Education Akamkpa.
oblajigo@gmail.com
+2348064751639.

Abstract

Information needs and seeking behavior of undergraduates Students of University of Calabar, the descriptive survey research design methods was used, questionnaire was the instrument used to collect data and was analysed using the simple percent statistics. The Population of the study was 865 under graduate students who were randomly selected for the study. From the study it was gathered that the undergraduate students have a positive attitude towards information seeking behavior. Information on current issues and needs information on carear development and scholarship, students are not interested on information bothering on health, politics and football as well as social activities, this shows that the students read basically during examination period while update on their knowledge about new things, writings assignments, seminars and projects work are social purposes, other findings showed that problems faced by students while seeking information which are outdated reading materials followed by materials not available on the shelf and the non supportive behavior of library staff are not willing and unfriendly to students. Based on the findings of the study recommendations were made.

Introduction

The 21st century can best be described as an era of information revolution with the presence of information bearing materials in diverse formats. Libraries and information centers are not only equipped with materials in traditional formats but also in electronic formats offering users a vast selection. With the array of information sources available in the university library, little wonder then that the library is known as the academic heart of the university (Odiase, Unegbu & Haliso, 2001)

Information seeking behavior according to Wilson (2000) entails the totality of human behavior in relation to sources and channels of information including active and passive information seeking. In the quest for information different kinds of behavior are manifested as students have different reasons for wanting information. Different levels of search skills and preferences for some types of information bearing materials, information seeking involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought.

Information is an essential part of all facets of life. It is such a n important raw material, that its acquisition and understanding is germane in decision making, policy formulation, as well as implementation for growth and survival. Reliable information is the cornerstone for building the awareness, expertise and practical strategies necessary to improve the world we live in , in terms of health, physical technical, mental, social and scientific development of humanity (Adetoro,2010). Without adequate information, not much can be achieved especially when it concerns decision making or acquisition of knowledge. Information is vital to

decision makers at all levels in all circumstances. However, there is always a need for individuals to obtain relevant information helps in reducing the degree of uncertainty in the operating environment of any organization. (Ajayi, 2007)

The concept of information behavior begins with an individual's need. Authorizes have argued that information need is the lack of appropriate information on which to base choice that could lead to benefits or services that may improve people's well being. Information need as the uncertainty that arises in the individual, which they believe can be satisfied through information acquisition. Factors that give rise to information need includes seeking answers, reducing uncertainties, bridging gaps, solving problems and understanding. The different characteristics of work environment make one type of information need and seeking different from the other. Therefore, it is beneficial to study each group of information seekers one at a time and use the results to develop user-oriented information systems in order to serve each group better. Beyond this, the assessment of information need and seeking behavior of various groups and individuals is essential in assisting them to access and use information resources for optimal performance and productivity. The whole essence of information need and seeking behaviour is for information use and the actual process of using information has to do with the way individuals internalize information content. Having access to relevant and timely information has a role to play in the way the information is used. Although, information is a fundamental concept, there are no definitional or methodological approaches that are broadly accepted or applied. Information is a vital resources needed by students to perform well in their academic pursuit. However research and observation reveals that students sit long hours in the library in the quest for information, however, the type of information sought, the purpose of seeking information, accessibility to information to the required information and problems encountered during information seeking remains largely unknown. This unknown phenomenon affects the library and the user (students) in the sense that the library may not effectively meet the information needs of the students and as such, students waste time in unfruitful search that would have been used for study.

Research Question
The following research questions guided the study:
1. What are the attitudes of students towards information resources in the library?
2. What are the information searching strategies used by undergraduate students?
3. What are the information needs of undergraduates in University of Calabar Library ?
4. What are the problems faced by undergraduates while seeking information at University of Calabar Library?
5. What is the solution to the problem of the above?

Concept of Information Seeking Behavior
Information seeking behavior, entails the totality of human behavior in relation to sources and channels of information including active and passive information seeking. In the quest for information, different kinds of behaviour are manifested as students have different reasons for wanting information, different levels of search skill and preference for some type of information bearing materials, information seeking involves personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information which are being sought and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought. The execution of an individual's information seeking system for a particular information problem is considered an Information Seeking Strategy (ISS). A well designed strategy will examine the problem and the work out the best source of information that will match the information need.

Concept of Information Needs
Conceptualizing information need is a very difficult task. This is because the needs of individuals usually vary from time to time due to several factors. However, information need as an information, whether recorded or not, which an individual or a member of a group requires for effective functioning in their daily activities. Information needs can be seen as a set data which enables the user to make appropriate decisions on any related problem facing him or her at a particular time. In other words, information is needed because

it enables individuals to make a decision that affects their living, information represents an ordered reality about the nature of the world people live in. the need for information in any society is individualistic. Individuals need information depending on the motive for such information. Taking the right decisions depends on access to information on all the alternatives and their implications, a thorough understanding of user information needs and information-seeking behaviour is fundamental to the provision of successful information services. It is important to understand the information-seeking behaviours of different groups of people, as it helps in the planning, implementation, operation, designing of new information systems and the development of service programmes in the work environment for optimal performance.

Information Searching Strategies Used By Undergraduates Students
Information searching strategies used by undergraduate students a few basic strategies had a common central role in the digital library use of these users. (using references at the back of consulted books) was one key strategy that formed the basic approach to finding contemporary academic research literature. The researchers also showed that, the undergraduate students in the humanities using the academic community as a source of recommendations demonstrated their academic reliance on human resources, particularly when established in their field. They also found that using a mixture of these two approaches formed the common foundations on which their information searching strategies were based. Students preferred to start research with behavior of undergraduate students noted that they preferred to start research with search engines and students preferred to seek help from peers or from faculty and not consult library staff or seek assistance from library web sites. Similarly, undergraduate students' information seeking behavior at the University of Georgia also found that students used search engines and web portals at 76 percent of the time and class websites was used almost as frequently at 71 percent of the time. The study also revealed that library OPAC and licensed databases was used at 36 percent of the time.

Problems of Information Seeking Behavior
Factors that affect information seeking behavior include personal reasons for seeking information, the kinds of information being sought and the ways and sources with which needed information is being sought. Information-seeking behavior is expressed in various forms, from reading printed material to research and experimentation. Information users make active and intentional attempts to seek up-to-data information from the library resources, including electronic sources.
However research and observation reveals that students sit long hours in the library in the quest for information, however, the type of information sought, the purpose of seeking information, accessibility to the required information and problems encountered during information seeking remains largely unknown. This unknown phenomenon affects the library and the user (students) in the sense that the library may not effectively meet the information needs of the students and as such, students waste time in unfruitful search that would have been used for study. The following problems of information seeking behavior and information needs:
1. Material is not available on the shelf
2. Outdated reading materials
3. Lack of awareness of the availability of material
4. English language material
5. Shortage of latest journals
6. Information sources are so far located
7. Information scattered in too many sources
8. Lack of time (Overworked)
9. Lack of knowledge about information retrieving techniques
10. Non-supportive behaviour of library staff
11. Unavailability of internet facility in the departments
12. Shortage of computers

Analysis of Data

The instrument for the data collection is questionnaire, eight hundred and ninety-five (895) questionnaires were distributed to undergraduates in faculty of management science, and eight hundred and sixty-five (865) were duly returned, presented below:

Table 1: Attitude towards information seeking behavior

Attitude towards information seeking	Response	Percentage (%)
Positive attitude	540	62.43
Negative attitude	-	-
Moderate attitude	325	37.57
Total	**865**	**100**

This table shows the attitude towards information seeking as the positive attitude 540 (62.43%) is higher than the moderate attitude of 325 (37.57%) and the negative attitude has none percentage. The researcher can infer that University Calabar Undergraduates have positive attitude towards information seeking behavior.

Table 2: Information needs that make you comes to use the library

Information needs	Response	Percentage (%)
Information related to my course of study only	700	80.92
Information on health, politics and football	3	0.35
Information on career development and scholarship	25	2.89
Information on social activities	2	0.23
Information on current issues	45	5.20
Information on self development	90	10.40
Total	865	100

Table 2 shows that 700 (80.92%) students need information related to my course of study only, 90 (10.40%) need information on self development, while 45 (5.20%) need information on current issues and 25 (2.89%) need information on career development and scholarship. Students are not interested on information on health, politics and football as well as social activities.

Table 3: Reasons for making use of the library.

Treasons for making use of the library	Response	Percentage (%)
Reading for examination period only	600	69.36
Update my knowledge about new things	225	26.01
Writing assignments, seminar and project	95	10.98
Just to borrow books	-	0.57
Recreational purposes	5	
Social purposes	40	4.62
Total	**865**	**100**

This table shows that those who tread for examination only is 600 (69.36%) while update my knowledge about new things is 225 (26.01%), writing my assignment, seminar and project work is 95(10.98%) and social purposes is 40 (4.62%). Looking at the table it shows the reasons why University Calabar students use the library.

Table 4: Types of information materials students consult in the library

Information materials in the library	Response	Percentage (%)
Books	800	92.48
Newspapers and other periodical materials	60	6.94
Reference material only	2	0.23
Internet resources	3	0.35
Non-book materials	-	-
Total	865	100

Concentrating on this table the types of information materials consulted most in the library as books 800 (92.48%), newspapers and other periodicals as well as internet material 60(6.94%) and 3 (0.35%).

Table 5: Information searching strategies used by undergraduates students for information materials.

Information searching strategies	Response	Percentage (%)
Using references at the back of textbooks	90	10.40
Browsing collection	5	0.57
Recommended reading list by lecturer	100	11.56
Searching directly on the shelves	10	1.15
Browsing the internet	260	30.05
Searching cataloguing cards	300	34.68
Inquiring from library staff/course mates	100	11.56
Total	865	100

This table shows that almost all the strategies are used by the students for information materials which are searching cataloguing cards cabinet 300 (34.68%), browsing the internet 260 (30.05%) while recommended reading list is 100 (11.56%) followed by inquiring from library staff/ course mates 100 (11.56%) and using reference at the back of textbooks is 90 (10.40%).

Table 6: Types of services the academic library render on daily basis

Services rendered in the Academic library	Response	Percentage (%)
Circulation services	200	23.12
Internet services	90	10.40
Book bank services	75	8.67
Current awareness services	60	6.94
Reprographic services	150	17.34
Reference services	300	34.68
Total	**865**	**100**

Looking at the table above, it shows some services the academic library render to its patrons on daily basis. Reference services 300 (34.64%), circulation services 200 (23.68%), reprographic services 150 (17.34%) and internet services 90 (8.67%) while current awareness services has lowest percentage. Someone can see that all of these services are rendered on daily basis.

Table 7: problems faced by students while seeking information

Problems of information seeking	Response	Percentage (%)
Materials not available on the shelf	200	23.12
Outdated reading materials	400	46.24
Lack of awareness of the source to get information materials needed	95	10.98
Lack of time by student	5	0.57
Non-supportive behavior of library staff (are not willing /unfriendly to student)	100	11.56
Unavailability of internet facility in the library	60	6.94
Shortage of computer	5	0.57
Total	**865**	**100**

The table above shows or identifies the problems faced by students while seeking information which are: outdated reading materials 400 (46.24%) followed by materials not available on the shelf 200(24.12%). The next is non supportive behavior of library staff or staff are not willing/unfriendly to students 100(11.56%) while the last is unavailability of internet facility in the library 60 (6.94).
We can see the problems faced by students while seeking information in the library.

Table 8: Solution to information seeking and needs to students

Solution to the problems	Response	Percentage (%)
Library guide	865	100
Library facilities/information in all formats	865	10
Digital library 24/7 on campus	865	100
Awareness services to students	Yes 800 (92.48%) No 65 (7.51%)	
Trained professional librarians	865	100
Library visitation	Yes 795 (91.90%) No 70(8.09%)	
Total	**865**	**100**

Table 8 shows that solution to information seeking and needs to students include digital library services 24/7 on the campus, trained professional librarians in the library, library guide provision for students and library facilities/ information materials should be provided in all formats as there are given hundred percentage agreement. Therefore, the researcher can conclude that the solution list above should be carried out by library management in Nigeria universities.

Conclusion
The study investigated information seeking behavior and needs among undergraduates in University Calabar. The study used questionnaires as instrument for data collection. The data collected were tabulated and analyzed using simple percentage as a statistical method.

Recommendation
Based on the findings, the researcher made the following recommendations in order to improve the effectiveness of information seeking behavior and needs among students in higher institutions of Nigeria:
1. Library should provide a guide for students on how to use the library
2. Library facilities/information materials in all formats should be adequate
3. Digital library services should be carried out twice in a semester
4. Trained professional librarians should be placed at circulation, reference and serial sections of the library
5. Library visit should be carried out for both new and old students twice in semester.

References

Ajiboye, D.O., &Tella,A. (2007). University undergraduate students' information seeking behavior: Implication for quality in higher education in Africa. The Turkish online Journal of Educational Technology 6 (1) also available: http:www.tojet.net/articles/614.pdf Retrieved 23 Sept.2010

Babcock University (2009). Babcock University 2009-2011 Undergraduate Bulletin. IIishan Remo: Unique Impressions Ltd.

Bates, M.J.(1996). The Getty-end-user online searching project in the humanities: Report no.6: Overview and conclusions. College and Research libraries, 57,514-523.

Broadus, R.N. (1987). Information needs of humanities scholars: A study of requests made at the National Humanities center. Library and Information Science Research,9, 113-129

Chikonzo, A.C.; & Aina, L. O. (2006). Information needs and sources of information used by veterinary students at the University of Zimbabwe. Quarterly Bulletin International association of Agricultural information Specialists (IAALD), 46(1-2), 24-28.

Covi, L.M. (1999). Material mastery: Situation digital library use in university research practices. Information processing and Management. 35,293-316.

Ellis, D., Cox, D. & Hall, K. (1993). A comparative of information-seeking patterns of research in the physical and social sciences, Journal of Documentation 49,356-369.

Hartmann, E. (2001). Understanding of information literacy: The perception of first year undergraduate students at the University of Ballarat. Australian Academic and research libraries. 32 (2), 35-43.

Kamada, R. W. (1999). Library use by university students: Case study of the East African school of Library and Information Science, Kampala: Makarere University Unpublished DLS Dissertation.

Kerin, G. W, Madden, R, & Fulton, C. (2004). Information-seeking and the students studying for professional careers: The case of engineering and law students in Ireland. Information Research 10 (1) paper 208. http:information.net/ir/10-1/paper208.html Retrieved Sept.23, 2010.

Kuhlthau, C. (1993). Seeking meaning: A process approach to library and information services. Norwood, N.J. : Ablex

Leckie, G.J., Pettigrew, K.E., & Sylvain, C. (1996). Modeling the information seeking of professionals and lawyers. Library Quarterly, 66 (2), 161-193.

Mann, T. (1993). Library research models: A guide to classification, cataloguing and computerts. New York: Oxford University Press.

Marchionini, G. (1989). Information-seeking strategies of novices using a full-text electronic encyclopedia. Journal of the American Society for Information Science 40 (1), 54-66

Odiase, J.O.U, Unegbu, V.E, & Haliso, Y.L. (2001). Introduction to the use of libraries and information sources. Benin City : Nationwide Publications

Seventh-day Adventist Year Book (2009). Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association

Ssendikadiwa, E.N.n (1996). Evaluation of library use instruction program first year students in Makarere University, Kampala-Uganda. Unpublished project report.

Taylor, R.S. (1991). Information use environment. In Brebda D. & Voigt, M. J. (Eds). Progress in communication science. Norwood, N.J.: Ablex.

Uloma, D.O. and Adedamola, A.A. (2001). Comparative Analysis of students. Information Seeking behaviour in Adventist Universities: A Survey of Babcock and Solusi Universities.Retrieved from http://unllib.unl.edu./LPP/ onuoha-awoniyi.htm.

Valentine, B. (1993). Undergraduate research behavior: Using focus groups to generate theory. Journal of Academic Librarianship, 19 (5), 300-304.

Whitemire, E. (2001). A longitudinal study of undergraduates' academic library experiences. Journal of Academic librarianship, 27, (5), 379-385.

Wilson, T. D. (2000). Human information behavior. Information Science, 3 (2), 49-55.