

## **Library Professional Skills and Utilization of Information Resources in Federal University Libraries**

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### ***ABSTRACT***

This study investigated the relationship between Library variables and utilization of information resources in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, two research questions were raised and two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 16620 students and a sample of 800 respondents was selected for the study. Stratified and purposive random sampling technique was used for the study. The results of the analyses revealed a significant relationship between weeding and selections of information resources. Based on these findings, it was recommended, among others that: weeding should be a regular exercise in the libraries to rid the shelves of irrelevant, obsolete and damaged information resources.

Keywords: Library variables; Utilization; information Resources; Federal University.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Information resources refer to the numerous media by which information is recorded for students and scholars to help them meet their educational needs (Subramanyam 2020; Patak & Jabu 2021). In pursuit of their goals, these resources function as means that expose students to academic accomplishment. They are expected to support the curriculum and extra-curricular activities which positively contribute to their academic success. Students who depend on these information resources for all their curricula needs such as doing assignments, writing of test, writing of term papers, seminars papers, and preparing for examinations are usually ahead of their counterparts who do not utilize the resources for further studies.

To keep the information resources in good condition and up-to-date, libraries must at some point remove older, irrelevant, or infrequently used materials to make space for new acquisitions (Thompson & Konlan 2015). This process is referred to as weeding, which is the removal of obsolete, shabby and non-usable information resources (books, periodicals, encyclopedias, videos etc.) from a library collection in a planned and systematic way. It is essential that the library information resources always be in good shape to encourage students to effectively utilize the information resources. A good number of information resources on the shelves of the library are in low demand and are hardly used by students, which renders them unusable. Meanwhile, there are new editions and titles of books and journals which are currently

being kept at the Cataloguing Department because of inadequate shelf space. The library therefore has a lot of information resources which actually need to be weeded to make room for newer books and journals. Well weeded library shelves are neat, attractive and easily accessible to students making information resources search less stressful and a more satisfying task. Inversely, library shelves with irrelevant and obsolete information resources, repulses the students thereby leading to underutilization.

Selection of information resources involves the professional and technical skills of choosing relevant information resources covering different areas in a given educational curricula from a list of publications for the university libraries (Lee, Paik & Joo 2012). This helps the librarians to select only those information resources that are demanded and useful to the students in print and non-print formats. For information resources to be effectively utilized the library holdings must be such that will satisfy the students' information needs and this can only be achieved through proper information resources selection. To prevents discouragement and lack of interest in the students which can lead to underutilization. Where students show lack of interest in utilizing library information resources, it can be that the information resources selected are of no relevance to the students, hence their underutilization.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

As important as the effective utilization of information resources is, it has been observed that students are not adequately committed to utilizing these library information resources provided for them as expected of them (Shafawi & Hassan 2018). This signifies that their level of utilization is poor and below expectation. This situation is seen in the number of students that register in the library and in the low daily statistics of books consulted, books borrowed by students for home use, number of books photocopied by students, number of electronic database logins and reader services monthly statistics of library users (Enidiok et al., 2018). It is on this premise that the study attempts to find out whether library professional skills relate to the utilization of information resources in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to investigate how library professional skills can relate to utilization of information resources in federal university libraries in South-south, Nigeria.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What is the relationship between weeding of information resources and utilization of information resources?
2. How does selection of information resources relate to utilization of information resources?

## **HYPOTHESES**

H<sub>01</sub> - Weeding of information resources has no significant relationship with utilization of information resources.

H<sub>01</sub> - There is no significant relationship between selection of information resources and utilization of information resources.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study may be of great benefit to the following groups of people: the government, library policy makers and librarians and students. The Government may benefit from this study as they will be properly educated on the need for adequate and appropriate funding for acquisition of information resources to enable the universities achieve their cardinal goals.

Library policy makers may benefit from this study as the information supplied by the study will help them make appropriate policies that will improve library collection development practices and services. Librarians also may benefit from the study as the findings will help them make necessary changes in their practice of librarianship which will lead to maximum utilization of information resources. More so, the academic librarians may find this information useful in preparing upcoming librarians in standard library practice.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Carr (2009) piloted a study on weeding of academic library reference collections: A survey of current practice. The aim of the study was to investigate several aspects of the management of the reference collection, particularly weeding of materials. Instrument for data collection was the structured questionnaire. The population of the study was made up of reference or public service librarians at five hundred and fifty (550), U.S. colleges and universities with enrollments between one and twenty thousand. Among questions asked were: the existence of a written policy or unwritten weeding practice; extent of weeding; frequency; what happens to discards; and effect available shelf space, staff time, and use of the materials have on weeding decisions. The study revealed that, relatively little formal attention was found to be given to the role and importance of weeding in the management of the reference collection. It was recommended that weeding should be done more frequently.

Benny (2015) conducted a study among the academic librarians in Mumbai University, India, to ascertain the major challenges faced by them while selecting and acquiring e-resources. For this study 80 undergraduate college Librarians under Mumbai University were randomly selected. A well-structured questionnaire was prepared and distributed among 80 undergraduate college librarians under Mumbai University. Out of that 68 college librarians fully completed the questionnaire given to them. The data received from the respondents was tabulated and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. The survey revealed that the college libraries' e-collection is dominated by e-journals. It was found that the librarians use multiple tools to select the e-resources. Apparently, the selection of e-resources depends upon the recommendations made by faculty and the subject relevance of the e-resources. The study revealed that the librarians use different methods to acquire the e-resources depending upon the types of e-resources. The survey also revealed that the college librarians provide in-house training to the library staff to update their skills.

Giraud (2017) carried out a study on book selection and acquisition: the role played by libraries between publishers, vendors and customers in university and public research institutes in Italy. The aim of the research was to describe and explore the situation in Italian university and public research libraries regarding selection and acquisition procedures with the focus on books. Taking into account the increasing importance of journals, this choice was dictated by many factors, such as the increasing cuts in funds for books, the intention to understand their role in the scientific environment, also considering the evolution of the electronic publishing sector. The research adopted a qualitative approach with the purpose of describing and exploring libraries. Therefore a questionnaire was drawn up. After carrying out a pilot test, it was sent to university and public research libraries all around the country. At the same time, from 9 Vendors contacted

6 were interviewed using the technique of non-structured interviews. The conversations provided interesting information and suggestions on issues not previously considered, thanks to the collaboration and the interest shown by vendors in the initiative. The interviews of two librarians, chosen in the scientific environment, provided more insight and additional information during the survey. After the analysis of data from questionnaire and interviews, the study revealed that, there was no collaborative relationship between the librarians, publishers and vendors, librarians lacked recognition and that positive collaboration was needed to keep up with innovations and to cope with fund reductions. It was recommended that, librarians and vendors should develop a path of collaboration and partnership so that both can cope with the aggressive policies of publishers.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an ex-post facto design. This research was carried out in south-south Nigeria. The targeted population of the study was the students who registered in their libraries in five federal universities in south-south zone of Nigeria. A sample of eight hundred students who have registered in their libraries, from five federal university libraries namely, university of Benin, University of Uyo, university of Port Harcourt, University of Calabar, University of Bayelsa. The sampling technique adopted for this study was purposive sampling technique. The data collected were then analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

## RESULTS

### Hypothesis 1

Weeding of information resources has no significant relationship with utilization of information resources. This was tested using Person product moment correlation as presented in table 1.

Table1: Person product moment correlation showing the relationship between weeding of information resources and utilization of information resources

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	r-value	p-level
Weeding of information resources	13.73	4.30	.367	.000
Utilization of information resources	15.04	3.36		

\*Significant at p-value, df=798

The independent variable in this hypothesis is weeding of information resources while the dependent variable is utilization of information resources. To test this hypothesis, Person product moment correlation analysis was employed. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 1. The result in Table 1 reveals that the calculated r-value of .367 is greater than the critical r-value of .088 at .05 level of significant with 798 degrees of freedom. With this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This result implies that weeding of information resources has a significant relationship with utilization of information resources.

### Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between selection of information resources and utilization of information resources. This was tested using Person product moment correlation as presented in table 2.

Table 2: Person product moment correlation showing the relationship between selection of information resources and utilization of information resources

Variables	$\bar{X}$	SD	r-value	p-level
selection of information resources	14.34	3.43	.235*	.000
utilization of information resources	15.04	3.36		

\*Significant at p-value, df=798

The independent variable in this hypothesis is awareness of information resources while the dependent variable is utilization of information resources. To test this hypothesis, Person product moment correlation analysis was employed. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 6. The result in Table 6 reveals that the calculated r; value of 235 is greater than the critical r, value of .088 at .05 level of significant with 798 degrees of freedom. With this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This result implies that selection of information resources significantly relate to utilization of information resources. This means that the more the selection of information resources, the higher the utilization of information resources by students.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The result of the hypothesis revealed that Weeding of information resources has a significant relationship with utilization of information resources. This finding is in agreement with the view of Alokun (2003) who maintains that the library does not just acquire irrelevant information resources, nor make them available for no just purposes. Such resources must be current, accurate and relevant to meet the academic needs of the users. The use of information resources is therefore presumed upon adequacy to satisfy the needs of the students. Nwaigwe and Onwuama (2004) asserted that the selection of information resources in the library should come after a proper study of the present and future needs of library users to be able to make informed selection.

The result of the second hypothesis revealed that selection of information resources has a significant relationship with utilization of information resources. This finding is in agreement with the view of Alokun (2003) who maintains that the library does not just acquire irrelevant information resources, nor make them available for no just purposes. Such resources must be current, accurate and relevant to meet the academic needs of the users. The use of information resources is therefore presumed upon adequacy to satisfy the needs of the students. Nwaigwe and Onwuama (2004) asserted that the selection of information resources in the library should come after a proper study of the present and future needs of library users to be able to make informed selection.

Improper selection of information resources as a result of lack of involvement of all interest groups deters utilization of information resources. This agrees with the findings of Lin (2008), who stressed that in some academic libraries, the librarians are restricted to selecting only general reference books and those materials do not covered departmental subject lines. This can be detrimental to achieving proper selection of needed information resources to represent all interest groups. The researcher recommended that in the information era and in the new information technology environment, faculties and librarians need to work together as partners to improve the lateral communications between them and to make faculty-library teamwork easier in book selection and ordering for academic libraries so as to meet the students' information needs. The findings of Egwim (2006) who piloted a study on collection development at Federal University of Technology, Owerri supports this. It was found that selection of information resources at FUTO library was open to interest groups, and therefore not monopolized by the

library, faculty or management, which allows for active participation of the university librarian, Acquisitions librarian, and course lecturers.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of these findings, it was concluded that weeding of information resources and selection of information resources, significantly relate to utilization of information resources in the university libraries. This implies that where the information resources are excellently weeded and selected there will be maximum utilization of information resources by students in Nigerian universities.

1. Weeding should be a regular exercise in the libraries to rid the shelves of irrelevant, obsolete and damaged information resources.
2. Selection of information resources should be open to stakeholders to enable them make inputs to cover the various disciplines.

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