

Library services and user satisfaction at the College of Agriculture Education, University of Education, Winneba.

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Abstract

The study appraised user satisfaction with the library collections and services offered by the College of Agriculture Education Library of University of Education, Winneba. The study adopted quantitative approach of descriptive survey design. The convenience sampling technique was employed to select 180 students who used the library. The semi-structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse the quantitative data for frequencies and percentages. The results showed that 58.3 percent of the respondents visited the Library to study and books were most popular library materials among users. Majority of the users were satisfied with the quality of services provided by the library staff, while 74.4 percent were satisfied with the overall quality of service the Library provided. Nevertheless, 84.1 percent of the users indicated that the library collection did not meet their information needs. Furthermore, the library environment was not conducive for reading. The greatest challenge that users encountered was dated and limited copies of available books. It was recommended that the Library Management should procure more current books; the Library should be relocated to the new library building and well-furnished with adequate tables and chairs and desktop computers.

Key Words: user satisfaction, academic libraries, user studies, university libraries, Ghana

Introduction

There is no gainsaying the fact that the main purpose of every academic library is to provide educational resources and services to satisfy the academic and research needs of the patrons of the parent institution. As such, academic libraries devote a lot of resources on collection building and staff development in order to support their parent institutions to fulfill their mission and vision. In view of this, the success of academic libraries is measured by the extent to which their patrons become satisfied with the resources and services they provide. Enhancing user satisfaction is integral to successful service-oriented organizations including libraries, because satisfied users remain loyal, have positive feelings and recommend the service to others. This is only possible when library managers maintain contact with users and understand their information needs (Majid, Anwar & Eisenschitz, 2001 as cited in Mairaj & Naseer, 2013).

As regards the definition of user satisfaction, Richardson (2002) argues that there is no singular definition, though it is distinguished as one of the three frequently cited performance outcomes of quality reference service. His basic premise is that user satisfaction is produced in the interaction between a customer and the librarian. Richardson (2002) asserts that “the user must be satisfied that the librarian has provided good service and exhausted all necessary avenues to find an answer to the query” (p.2). However, one framework for defining user satisfaction in evaluation of quality for library service is the definition proposed by Applegate (1997) that

“satisfaction is best understood as a personal, emotional reaction to a library service or product” (p. 200). In order to examine the user satisfaction process, Applegate (1993) made a distinction between material and emotional satisfaction; and provides three models to describe the satisfaction formation process. The first is the Material Satisfaction Model (MSM) mainly employed in evaluating reference; which is based on the ability of the source to retrieve items that are assessed to be useful. The second model is the Emotional Satisfaction Model-Simple Path (ESM-SP). In this Model, Applegate (1993) posits that satisfaction is measured when the patron reacts directly or indirectly to one or more questions suggesting happiness or unhappiness with the product of the reference encounter. The two Models presume that if material satisfaction is achieved then emotional satisfaction is also achieved. The third Model is the Emotional Satisfaction Model-Multiple Path (ESM-MP) in which the patron’s evaluation of reference encounter is based not only on questions answered (material satisfaction) but also on factors such as setting and expectations. She concluded that if patrons’ needs and expectations are met then naturally they would be satisfied since their requests have been provided. In addition, Tiemo and Ateboh (2016) considered user satisfaction as “the satisfaction the users derive from the library by using various types of information resources and services to fulfill their information need for various daily activities” (p.54).

In order to provide better services to their clients, libraries conduct surveys as one of the instruments to collect data which provides feedback on user satisfaction and is used to assess how users feel about the services provided by the library. Evidence from library evaluation studies has shown that users are the key stakeholders, and their feedback is the most reliable factor in measuring the usefulness and effectiveness of a library (Majid, Anwar & Eisenschitz, 2001, as cited in Mairaj & Naseer, 2013).

Although a lot of investment has been made to acquire library materials and trained the staff of the College of Agriculture Education Library, no study of this nature has been done to assess how satisfied users are with the services the library provides. In view of this, the study was done to appraise users’ satisfaction in respect of the resources and services provided by the Library, to satisfy their information needs.

Background to the Study

The University of Education, Winneba (UEW) has four campuses located at different parts of Ghana. These campuses are located at Winneba, Ajumako, Kumasi and Mampong-Ashanti, all in Ghana. The UEW Library System consists of all libraries that are located on the four campuses. They are Osagyefo Library and SACOST Library at the South Campus, North Campus Library and IEDE Library at the North Campus (all in Winneba), College of Technology (COLTEK) Library in Kumasi, College of Agriculture Education Library in Mampong-Ashanti, and Ajumako Campus Library in Ajumako and Departmental Libraries.

This study was conducted in the College of Agriculture Education Library in Mampong-Ashanti. The Library has total stock of 9,602, 42 Journal Titles, 38 Online Databases that consist of 38,000 Online Journals. This stock covers all the Programmes offered in the College such as Agriculture Education, Environmental Health and Sanitation Education, and Science Education. The Library has a total seating capacity of 120 for total student enrolment of 3,206 in 2016/2017 academic year. However, a new Library with total seating capacity of 350 has been completed and is about to be furnished. The new Library has offices for staff, washroom facilities, Reading Room, ICT Computer Lab and an Auditorium. Significantly, provision has been made for easy entry and exit for the physically challenged. The Library opens from 8.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. daily on week days and public holidays. The library remains open from 8.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. on Saturdays and 2.00 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. on Sundays.

Literature Review

There is a considerable study done about user satisfaction in academic libraries. A study was done by Agbeh (2010) at the University of Education, Winneba, College of Technology Education, Kumasi (COLTEK) Library to assess library-user perception of service delivery at the Library among 455 users. His findings revealed that

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users were generally satisfied with staff performance while a high rating was given by users in respect of satisfaction of their information needs.

A similar survey was conducted among 452 undergraduates at the Institute of Educational Development and Extension (IEDE) Library in University of Education, Winneba by Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2012) to assess users' satisfaction with the services provided at the IEDE Library. Their findings indicated that majority of users used the Library two or three times a week to browse the Internet while the least number of users visited the Library to read newspapers. Furthermore, majority of users described the staff as efficient or helpful and were also satisfied with the overall services provided by the Library including available collections. With regard to how to improve upon the services in the Library, most of the users suggested that more computers should be added to the existing ones.

Chandrasekar and Murugathas (2013) conducted a survey in the University of Jaffna Library, Sri Lanka, among 63 undergraduates offering Biology, to assess library user satisfaction regarding the currently available information sources and services. The study revealed that majority of respondents used the library for learning and research purposes and for borrowing books, whilst the least number of the respondents used the library as a quiet place for study. Furthermore, majority of respondents were satisfied with the library collection and positive attitudes of the library staff in respect of helping them in locating relevant information. With regard to the library environment, majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with the available reading tables and chairs, cleanliness of the library, lighting, and physical space. However, the efficiency of some of the available services such as photocopying, selective dissemination of information and current awareness did not meet the expectations of the users.

Furthermore, a survey was done among postgraduate students and medical practitioners by Mairaj and Naseer (2013) to investigate users' level of satisfaction with the services provided and to discover weak areas which could be improved upon by Punjab Institute of Cardiology Library, Pakistan. The findings suggested that the respondents were satisfied with the library collection, organization, reference and circulation services, staff attitudes, cooling and heating system. However, they expressed worrying concern about library space, opening hours, furniture and environment. They suggested more availability of electronic library services, newer collections, better internet access and comfortable furniture.

Ijiekhuamhen, Aghojare and Ferdinand (2015) conducted a survey in Federal University of Petroleum Resources in Nigeria among 381 students to appraise users' satisfaction regarding the services, infrastructure, place, space, collection and information provided by the library. This study revealed that majority of respondents was highly satisfied with the library services as a whole. The study also revealed that majority of the users visited the library every day in order to access the Internet. The respondents suggested that the library should have longer opening hours, internet bandwidth should be increased, and a guide on information searching skills should be published, among others.

Recently, Tiemo and Ateboh (2016) carried out a study in the College of Health Sciences Library of Niger Delta University, Nigeria. The results revealed that the users were satisfied with lending services, renewal of library materials, and longer hours of internet services in the library. Nevertheless, they were dissatisfied with the limited reference materials and journals because they were not current.

Furthermore, Deo (2016) carried out a survey in Fiji National Library to examine the degree of user satisfaction among 690 users. The findings revealed that 55.2 percent of users visited the Library daily, 38.4 percent of users visited the Library a few times per week, while others visited the Library once a month. The majority used the Library for study and research purposes. The majority of users, 73.9 percent were satisfied with the library collection, but mentioned that the copies of available textbooks were inadequate. Also, 75.5 percent expressed satisfaction regarding enquiries on information and reference, 89.4 percent were satisfied with the library environment, while 96.8 percent indicated that the staff were helpful.

Statement of the Problem

The advent of the global digital revolution has exposed academic libraries to keen competition as providers of information. Information is currently ubiquitous and users are able to access information elsewhere without stepping into the library building. In this digital age, “the academic audience is no longer captive because students and scholars can increasingly bypass the library to satisfy their information needs” (Ross & Sennyey, 2008, p.145). The digital age has resulted in change in user needs and expectations of information services. In order to retain existing users and attract new ones, there is the need that academic libraries provide resources and services that meet information needs of their users. According to Haro (1971) as cited in Chandrasekar and Murugathas (2013)

The primary consideration of a library seeking to serve its patrons is its ability to seek out both users and non-users in a continuing attempt to systematically discern their library needs and information requirements, earnestly attend to them, and then anticipate future ones. If the use is low, it is the library’s responsibility to find out why and to seek solution (p. 35).

Furthermore, Webb, Gannon-Leary and Bent(2007) advised that libraries should take stock of their resources, evaluate the services and resources they provide, enquire from their patrons what they want from the library and combine the results of these investigations with new ideas and developments in order to provide a comprehensive and effective service to their patrons.

The College of Agriculture Education Library has been making a lot of investment in collection development and staff training in order to provide optimal service to users. However, no study of this kind has ever been undertaken to determine if the Library collections and services are meeting information needs of users. As such, it is imperative to conduct this study in order to receive feedback from users to assess how well the Library is meeting their information needs and anticipate their future needs and integrate them into the library’s strategic planning process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to investigate the frequency of library visits and purpose. Furthermore, the study sought to appraise user’s satisfaction in respect of library’s collections, services provided by the staff, and the library environment. Finally, the study would identify challenges users encountered while using the library and adopt remedial measures to improve the situation.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions guided the study:

1. How often do users visit the Library and for what specific purpose?
2. What type of material(s) do users use most often in the Library?
3. To what extent do the library collections meet information needs of users?
4. How conducive is the library environment for academic purposes?
5. How helpful are the library staff to students in their search for information?
6. How do users rate the quality of service offered in the library?
7. What are the challenges that users face when using the library?
8. How can the library services be improved to meet users’ expectations?

Methodology

The study adopted the quantitative approach of descriptive survey design because it provides descriptive, inferential and explanatory information (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The College of Agriculture Education has total student enrolment of 3,206 in 2016/2017 academic year. However, the population for this study comprised all students who visited and used the Library in May, 2017. This period was chosen for the study because the students were writing the end-of-semester examination and they used the library heavily. A

total of 200 students were selected for the study through convenience sampling procedure. Thus, all students who visited the Library during the period of the study and were available responded to the questionnaire.

A questionnaire was used for data collection. Most of the questions were adapted from Lingnan University (2016). All the questions were open-ended except one. The questionnaire had five parts. Part one covered biographic data of respondents, part two elicited the views of respondents about customer service, part three contained items that sought perception of respondents on library resources. The perceptions of the respondents about library services were covered in part four and part five was about the library environment. A total of 180 out of the 200 copies of the questionnaire that were administered, were retrieved. The response rate was 90 percent. Babbie (2005) posits that a response rate of 50 percent is adequate for analysis and reporting, 60 percent is good, while 70 percent is very good. The data was analysed for frequencies and percentages computed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS Version 20) software.

Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: How often do users visit the Library and for what specific purpose?

The purpose of this question was to investigate the frequency of use of the Library and what users did in the Library. The results are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency of Use of the Library

Value Label	Frequency	Percentage
More than twice a week	83	46.1
Daily	52	28.9
Once in two weeks	24	13.3
Once a week	11	6.1
Twice a week	10	5.6
Total	180	100

Source: Field survey (2017)

The results indicated that 83(46.1%) used the Library more than twice a week, 52(28.9%) visited the Library daily, 24(13.3%) visited the Library once in two weeks, 11(6.1%) respondents used the Library once a week and 10(5.6%) visited the Library twice in a week. This finding that the majority, 145(80.6%) students visited the Library at least twice in a week is quite encouraging since the resources of the library were well utilized by the students. This finding validates earlier study done by Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2012) that majority of the respondents used the Library more than twice a week. This finding also contradicts the study conducted by Ijiekhuamhen et al. (2015) and Deo (2016) in which the majority of respondents visited the library every day.

Also, the results showed that the majority, 105(58.3%) students used the Library for study, 77(42.8%) of them used the Library to do research, 29(16.1%) users read Serials (journals, newspapers, magazines), and 12(6.7%) did leisure reading while only 1(0.6%) student socialized with friends. It is heartwarming that majority of the respondents used the Library to advance their academic work. This finding agrees with the study by Deo (2016), but contradicts the studies done by Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2012) and Ijiekhuamhen et al. (2015) that revealed that majority of respondents visited the libraries to browse the Internet and used electronic resources.

Research Question 2: What type of material(s) do users use most often in the Library?

The purpose of this research question was to find out the most popular material in the Library. In this regard, the students were asked to indicate the types of material they used most often in the Library. The findings would go a long way to guide the collection development of the library. The findings are displayed on Table 2.

Table 2: Materials Most Often Used In the Library

Material	Frequency	Percentage
Books	127	70.5
Serials	41	22.8
Long Essays	10	5.6
Lecture Notes	2	1.1
Total	180	100

Source: Field survey (2017)

The result shows that majority of the respondents, 127(70.5%), used books, 41(22.8 %) read serials (journals, newspapers, magazines), 10(5.6%) users consulted Long Essays, and 2(1.1%) respondents read their lecture notes. The results clearly indicated that books were most popular library material among the students and were effectively utilized.

Research Question 3: To what extent do the library collections meet the information needs of users?

The purpose of this question was to explore whether or not the available collections meet information needs of the users. This is because user satisfaction partly depends on availability of suitable and relevant collections that meet information needs of users. The results are illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Perception of the Library Collection

Faculty	SA Freq. (%)	A Freq. (%)	SD Freq. (%)	D Freq. (%)	U Freq. (%)	Total Freq. (%)
Agriculture	7(7.6)	23(25.0)	16(17.4)	29(31.5)	17(18.5)	92
Environmental Health and Sanitation Education	7(8.0)	23(26.1)	11(12.5)	20(22.7)	27(30.7)	88

Source: Field Survey, 2017, **Key:** SA – Strongly Agree; A- Agree; SD – Strongly Disagree; D – Disagree, U – Uncertain

From Table 3, 30(32.6%) respondents were satisfied with collections in Agriculture Education, while 45(48.9%) respondents were dissatisfied with the collection. However, 17(18.5%) respondents were undecided. Similarly, 30(34.1%) respondents were satisfied with the collections in Environmental Health and Sanitation Education, 31(35.2%) respondents were dissatisfied with the collection and 27(30.7%) respondents were undecided. This finding revealed that overall, 76(84.1%) students were not satisfied with the library collection in both Agriculture Education and Environmental Health and Sanitation Education programmes in meeting their information needs. This finding should be of concern to the Library Management since it could adversely affect academic work.

This result corroborates the findings of Mairaj, and Naseer (2013). However, this finding also disagrees with the earlier findings of Agbeh (2010); Chandraser and Murugathas (2013); Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2012); Ijiekhuamhen et al. (2015) and Deo (2016) that majority of the respondents were satisfied with the collection as far as their respective programmes were concerned.

Research Question 4: How conducive is the Library environment for academic purposes?

The purpose of this question was to investigate if the Library environment was comfortable and conducive to enhance academic work. This is because a conducive and comfortable environment attracts users to visit and use the library effectively. The respondents chose multiple options to indicate what the library environment was. The findings are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: User Satisfaction with the Library Environment

Statement	SA	A	SD	D	U	Total
	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)	Freq. (%)
The library is always clean and tidy	54 (30.0)	101(56.1)	7(3.9)	8(4.4)	10(5.6)	180(100)
The Library is secure and safe	52(20.9)	101(56.1)	7(3.9)	9(50.0)	11(6.1)	180(100)
There are enough lights	34(18.9)	86(47.8)	15(8.3)	18(10.0)	27(15.0)	180(100)
The ventilation is good	34(18.9)	87(48.3)	15(8.3)	25(13.9)	19(10.6)	180(100)
The Library is a quiet place for reading	29(16.1)	18(10.0)	73(40.6)	50(27.8)	10(5.6)	180(100)
The Library is spacious and comfortable	15(12.8)	50(27.8)	49(27.2)	52(28.9)	14(7.8)	180(100)
There are sufficient reading tables and chairs	23(12.8)	28(15.6)	54(30.0)	57(31.7)	19(10.6)	180(100)

Source: Field survey (2017), **Key:** SA – Strongly Agree; A- Agree; SD – Strongly Disagree; D– Disagree, U - Uncertain

The results showed that 155(86.1%) users agreed that the Library was always clean and tidy, 153(85.0%) of them also indicated that safety and security in the Library were good, 121(67.2%) students indicated that lighting was good, while 120(66.7%)users affirmed that ventilation in the library was good. However, 123(68.3%) disagreed that the Library was quiet for reading, 101(56.1%) users also indicated that the library space was inadequate, while 111(61.7%) also indicated that reading tables and chairs were inadequate. This finding revealed that the library environment was good but not conducive for reading because of small space, inadequate furniture and noise. This finding agrees with that of Deo (2016) in which majority of the users were satisfied with the library environment. However, the result contradicts an earlier study conducted by Ijiekhuamhen et al. (2015) in which majority of respondents rather expressed satisfaction with the available library infrastructure and space. This revelation implies that the students were not utilizing the Library fully for reading and this could adversely affect their academic work.

Research Question 5: How helpful are the library staff to students in their search for information?

The purpose of this question was to find out if Library staff assisted the users in their quest to retrieve relevant information in the Library. Competent staff that are able to provide and make information resources accessible to users timely, goes a long to have positive impact on user satisfaction. The students chose multiple options to indicate how helpful the staff were to them. The results revealed that “the staff are available when I need them” got 168(93.3%) responses, “the staff are neat in appearance” got 166(92.2%) responses, “the staff are approachable and welcoming” also received 161(89.4%) responses, “the staff are courteous and polite” got 159(88.3%) responses, “the staff are friendly” got 157(87.2%) responses, “the staff are helpful” received 147(81.7%) responses, "the staff are professional” had 146(81.1%) responses. This finding is significant because the students would feel motivated to fully utilize the library. Overall, the students indicated that the staff were helpful to them in their search for relevant information. This finding is significant because the students would feel motivated to fully utilize the library. This finding corroborates the results of the studies done by Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2012);Mairaj and Naseer(2013); Ijiekhuamhen et al. (2015) and Deo (2016).

Research Question 6: How do users rate the quality of service offered in the library?

Furthermore, all the students were asked to rate overall satisfaction with the quality of service offered in the Library. The feedback from users in respect of the quality of services offered by the Library will determine effectiveness of the resources and services offered with regard to user satisfaction. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Rating of Overall Quality of Service

Rating	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent	8	4.4
Very Good	52	28.9
Good	74	41.1
Satisfactory	46	25.6
Poor	0	0
Total	180	100.0

Source: Field survey (2017)

The results showed that a total of 134(74.4%) users rated the quality of service from “excellent” to “good”, while 46(25.6%) felt that the quality of service was “satisfactory”. It is significant that none of the respondents indicated that the quality of service was “poor” This finding indicated that all the students were satisfied with overall quality of services provided by the Library. This result implies that the students would be encouraged to patronize the services provided by the Library in order to satisfy their information needs. This finding corroborates conclusions of other studies conducted by Agbeh (2010); Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2012); Mairaj, and Naseer (2013), and Ijiekhuamhen et al. (2015).

Research Question 7: What are the challenges that users face when using the library?

The respondents were asked to indicate the challenges they faced when using the Library. The findings are presented in Table5.

Table 5: Challenges Users Face Using the Library

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Dated and limited copies of books	86	47.8
Inadequate space	35	19.4
Poor internet services	31	17.2
Noise and disturbance from outside the library	15	8.3
Unreliable power supply	13	7.2
Total	180	100.0

Source: Field survey (2017)

The results revealed that 86(47.8%) users indicated that the books were old and of limited copies, 35(19.4%) mentioned inadequate space in the library, 31(17.2%) also indicated that internet services were poor, 15(8.3%) students also mentioned noise and disturbance from nearby houses and market for food vendors, while 13(7.2%) of them indicated that power supply was unreliable. This study also indicated that the greatest challenge encountered by users in using the library was dated and limited copies of available books. Others included inadequate space in the library, poor internet services, noise and disturbance, and unreliable power supply, respectively. This situation didn't augur well for the College since academic libraries are expected to provide current sufficient copies of books that are relevant to the programmes of their parent institutions. The overall effect of this finding is that students might be deprived relevant and requisite books for their studies which could adversely affect their academic work.

Research Question 8: How can the library services be improved to meet users' expectations?

The study sought opinions of users by asking them to make suggestions for overall improvement of the library services. This is to enable the users to address areas that might not be captured by the questions posed by the study. This question generated 226 comments and suggestions. The majority, being 37.6 percent of the suggestions dealt with provision of current books, 21.7 percent expressed the need to increase the desktop computers and improved access to Internet, 18.6 percent suggested that the Library should be relocated to the

new Library building to accommodate more users. Furthermore, 13.7 percent indicated that opening hours of the library be increased at weekends and during examination periods, 8.4 percent also indicated that books should be arranged on the shelves properly. This result indicated that the greatest need of the students was current library books. This finding validates the results of study done by Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2012), and Ijiekhuamhen et al. (2015) in which similar suggestions were made for improvement of the library services.

Conclusion

This study appraised user satisfaction in respect of the resources and services provided by the College of Agriculture Education Library of the UEW Library to meet information needs of users and put remedial measures in place to improve the situation. The study revealed that majority of the students effectively utilized the library mostly to study; and the most popular library materials used by the students were books. In addition, the users were satisfied with overall services provided by the library. Furthermore, the library staff were helpful to the students in their quest to meet their information needs. Majority of the students were satisfied with ventilation, lighting, cleanliness and tidiness, as well as safety and security in the Library. However, the library environment was not conducive for reading. Significantly, the library's collection did not fully meet information needs of the students. Finally, the greatest challenge encountered by students using the library was dated and limited copies of available books; others were inadequate space in the library, poor internet services, noise, and unreliable power supply.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Library Management should procure more current books to augment the existing stock for all Programmes offered in the College.
2. The College Management should expedite action to relocate to the newly constructed library building that can accommodate more users. The new library should also be properly and adequately furnished to provide a comfortable and conducive environment for reading.
3. The Library Management should procure more new desktop computers that should be connected to the Internet to enhance access to online information to supplement the print information. Furthermore, a standby generator should be procured by the Library Management to address the unreliable power supply and improve access to the Internet.

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