

Full Length Research Paper

User satisfaction with academic libraries services: Academic staff and students perspectives

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Academic libraries are presently faced with challenges as a result of the introduction of information technology which has led to an increase in competition among information providers. Libraries must improve the quality of their services to enable them face the challenges of information explosion in the 21st century. Service oriented organizations have identified the customer or user as the most critical voice in assessing service quality. For assessment of service quality to be effectively carried out in academic libraries, it is imperative to investigate what service quality is to users. This paper examines the relationship between service quality and users' satisfaction at Redeemer's University and examines how user surveys have been employed in a number of previously published literatures. A questionnaire was used as a data collection instrument for the study. The study revealed that of the academic staff and students who formed the population for the study, students were found to have used the library most; the College of Management Sciences had the highest frequency of use and it also showed that users were satisfied with the services of the library.

Key words: Redeemer's University, user satisfaction, academic libraries, services.

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries are libraries attached to academic institutions of learning to serve teaching and research needs of students and staff. These libraries serve two complementary purposes: to support the university curriculum, and to support research of the university faculty and students. In process, the library plays a key role in the nation building process. Cullen (2001) noted that academic libraries today are facing their greatest challenge since the explosion in tertiary education and academic publishing the world over. The author further argued that the global digital revolution is affecting both the traditional forms of the creation, organization, and dissemination of knowledge and the world of tertiary education itself. Academic libraries should strive to survive and grow their user base focusing on meeting their users' expectations. Jayasundara (2008) in his paper notes that user perceptions and expectation studies have become one of the most popular studies in the area of service quality in many academic libraries. The user expectations and satisfaction has been used to determine the service quality which is been seen as

critical for service organizations to position themselves strongly in a competitive environment (Jayasundara, 2008).

Historical background of Redeemer's University

Among private universities in Nigeria, Redeemer's University (RUN) was established out of the desire of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) to create and impact university education in the country having realized the role university education can play in the social and technological development of a nation. This laudable thought started becoming a reality when in 1993; the Federal Government of Nigeria promulgated a decree allowing private individuals and organizations to establish private universities in the country (Redeemer's University 1st Convocation Programme, 2009). The parent body of this university monitored the development of tertiary education in the country with particular attention to the inability of a high percentage of eligible

candidates to secure admission to various programmes in the existing public universities in the country. The proprietors not only thought of establishing a private university to provide for additional places to absorb the growing student population in the country but to also considerably improve upon the existing standard of teaching and learning in the universities. The proposal to establish Redeemer's University is therefore a noble effort towards producing the requisite high level person power required for the development of the nation. Having fulfilled the National Universities Commission (NUC) criteria for establishing a private university in the country, the Federal Government granted an operating license to the Redeemer's University on 7th January, 2005. The university took-off at the temporary site in the Redemption City in October, 2005 with three colleges, namely: College of Humanities, College of Management Sciences and College of Natural Sciences. Four hundred and seventy-three (473) pioneer students matriculated into the colleges to pursue bachelor degrees in various programmes in September, 2005 (Redeemer's University 1st Convocation Programme, 2009). The university library took off along with the institution the same year.

It is rich in current literature in the humanities, management sciences and natural sciences. It has a collection of approximately 18,000 volumes as at the end of 2010. The library also stocks current journals both print and electronic in all the disciplines which the university runs. The collection also includes non-print materials, slides, videos and transparencies. The library is fully automated, with facilities in the virtual library and all offices.

Statement of problem

Libraries are established to provide information resources and services to meet users' information needs. The purpose of a library is defeated if its users are not satisfied with the resources and services it provides. This study is set to find out if users of Redeemer's University library are being satisfied with the services the library renders.

Objectives of the study

This study is undertaken to:

- 1) Identify who amongst the academic staff and students used the library the most;
- 2) Identify the college that has highest frequency of library use;
- 3) Identify any challenges faced by users in obtaining needed library materials; and
- 4) Examine the extent of users' satisfaction with the library services.

Research questions

The study was guided by the under listed research questions:

Personal information

- i) What is the status of the academic staff and students?
- ii) What is the gender of respondents?
- iii) What college do the academic staff and students come from?

Use of library

- i) Which academic staff and students have the highest frequency of library use?
- ii) Do the users obtain materials on current research areas in the library?
- iii) Is users' acquiring access to needed information promptly?
- iv) What is the users' opinion of the conduciveness of the library environment?

Library services

- i) Do the users find the library staff efficiency relatively satisfactory?
- ii) Do library employees provide relevant and personalized service?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Libraries are service oriented organizations established for the provision of relevant information resources and quality services to meet their users' information needs. Sowole (1995) noted that users are described as the reason (reason for existence) of the library. Meeting the information needs of users requires the provision of the actual information resources and services that will satisfy the needs of users. Simmonds (2001) stated several factors that can influence user's satisfaction; these factors include responsiveness, competence and assurances, tangibles and resources. Sowole (1995) implored librarians to make maximum efforts to ensure that their library users derived the best possible benefits from the services they render. Materials are to be provided by libraries to support the learning, teaching and research processes and to provide assistance to users. Simmonds and Andaleeb (2001) argued that providing quality services in academic libraries is now a major issue among academic librarians; they see the library more in terms of the provision of and access to service quality than as just a physical place. Technology and

automation have also changed the way people perceive libraries. As a result, the roles of libraries and librarians themselves have been re-evaluating their role as reflected in many literatures. They emphasize the provision of good library service as more important to the users than the mere physical library building. This perspective as stated in Simmonds and Andaleeb's article entitled: „Usage of Academic Libraries: The role of service quality, resources, and user characteristics“ (2001) is evidence in several recent studies on user's satisfaction with library services with academic libraries services. The authors stressed that access to information provided by libraries is seen as more important than the materials physically available in a library. Quality service is a competitive necessity for businesses and service organizations. Assessing service quality is therefore the first step in retaining costumers in today's competitive environment.

When library customers are faced with a variety of alternative channels of information delivery, many of which are more convenient and can compete on cost, libraries need to re-examine the range and quality of services they provide and develop systems for consultation and cooperation with their customer needs and customer expectations to the highest degree. Abagai (1993) noted that the use of library by users and indeed their satisfaction with library services depend on the availability of suitable learning materials, accommodation and competent staff in the library. On further comment, Abagai argued that the main objective of any library is to support the parent institution; such an objective is achieved through systematic acquisition and organization of all forms of recorded information in all fields pertinent to the goals of the institution and by making such information available to the members of the institution. Simmonds and Andaleeb (2001) posited that by providing quality services and satisfaction to users, academic and research libraries can distinguish their services through friendly, helpful and knowledgeable advice and the best technological resources available. Because academic libraries users have varying needs and expectations, it is the responsibility of the library staff to know these needs and expectations and strive to meet them. Igben (1993) noted that for a library to be most functional, the services it renders should correspond closely with the needs of its users. Ensuring that relevant information resources are provided and made accessible to users goes a long way to encourage users to visit the library more often. Simmonds and Andaleeb (2001) stated that the effectiveness of libraries has often been measured by the volume of library materials available to clients, the amount of use of services and resources, and the apparent or quantified satisfaction of clients. Song (2009) writes on designing library services based on user needs. He notes that user needs change continuously and recognizes also the need to reach out to users with new services. Nnadozie (2006) evaluates the services and

collection of the Federal Medical Centre Library, Owerri, Nigeria. His findings reveal that the librarians were not proactive and that there was no personalized information service in place. The author concludes that the basic tools and facilities for the delivery of qualitative library services are either available in inadequate quantities or completely non-existent; this according to him explains why most of the patrons are not satisfied with the library.

A number of recommendations were offered to improve the situation. Dougherty and Marthy (2008) say when a customer contacts companies for service, they care about certain things. Their recent research demonstrates that most customers care most about two things: is the frontline employer knowledgeable? And is the problem resolved on the first call? The result shows that more than half of the customers surveyed across industries say they have had a bad service experience, and nearly the same fraction think many of the companies they interacted with do not understand or care about them. On the average, 40% of customers who suffer through bad experiences stop doing business with the offending company. The findings here serve as inspiration for this study. Mundt (2003) conducted a research on user satisfaction in order to determine the quality of service in selected libraries. The survey carried out indicates that comparative data are a suitable means of identifying cases of “best practice” in services institutions. Customer satisfaction is regarded as customers can get more benefits than their cost (Liu and Yen, 2010). Customer satisfaction plays the most important role in total quality management. In comparison with other traditional performance measures, customer satisfaction is probably less sensitive to seasonal fluctuations, changes in costs or changes in accounting practices (Kotler, 2006). Therefore, many researchers consider customer satisfaction to be the best indicator of a company's future profit. Martensen and Gronholdt (2003) reviewed literatures and surveyed focus groups indicating that key determinant for library service quality were: electronic resources, collections of printed publications, other library services, technical facilities, library environment and human side of user service. Majid et al. (2001) applied a questionnaire survey to investigate all possible factors that had great impact on library performances. The results showed that collections, equipment and physical facilities were viewed as most important issues. Brady et al. (2001) employed LISREL analysis to study customers of fast-food restaurant in America and Latin America. The results indicated that there was a certain relationship between a quality and customer satisfaction based on different cultural background. In addition, service quality had significantly impacts on customers' satisfaction.

Sureshchandar et al. (2002) found that service quality and customer satisfaction were highly related. User's expectations have increased as a result of rapid development of advanced information technology, increasing generation of new knowledge and information

Table 1. Users' status.

Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Academic staff	7	3.7
Student	179	95.7
No response	1	5
Total	187	100

Table 2. Distribution of users by gender.

Gender	Academic staff	Percent (%)	Students	Percent (%)
Male	5	3.7	62	34.4
Female	2	28.6	118	65.6
Total	7	100	180	100

availability from both printed as well as online media. User satisfaction and optimization of resources have become important areas for libraries to maintain awareness of. Many libraries especially the university libraries are focusing on evaluation of the users' needs and their satisfaction with their services. User surveys can provide useful perceptions of service quality in libraries. For example Texas University libraries conducted focus group studies in 2001 with graduate and undergraduate studies in order to gather specific information related to their satisfaction with and confidence in the assistance provided at library service points. The sessions revealed that users were generally pleased with the assistance provided them by professional staff at reference desks and that they found librarians to be usually patient and helpful although there were some elements of dissatisfaction identified by the respondents. The findings of such studies are being used to improve library directional tools and to improve staff training for public service staff (Crowley and Gilreath, 2002). Similarly King (2005) and Hiller (2001) have mentioned that the information needs and expectations are continuously changing in the rapidly changing information scenario. Libraries need to re-orient their collections, services and facilities to keep pace with these advancements.

User feedback is considered as a more reliable factor in measuring the utility and effectiveness of any library. This is the reason that library user surveys have become widespread in academic libraries during the past twenty years. Surveys have often been used as a tool to assess service quality and user satisfaction.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research method was adopted for this study because similar studies adopted this approach. A questionnaire was designed and used to collect data for this study. Population for the study comprises of one hundred and fifty (150) academic staff and

eight hundred (800) students in 200 levels and above. The questionnaire was administered to seven (7) academic staff and one hundred and seventy nine (179) students who visited and used the library within the period of research through the assistance of the Library assistants. A total of one hundred and eighty-seven (187) questionnaires were duly completed and found useable for the study. The questionnaire was in three parts. Part A elicited background information such as status, gender and college of respondents. Part B was used to elicit information on respondents' usage of library while part C elicited information on respondents' perception of the library and employees. The data was analyzed using simple percentages and frequency counts. Table 1 showed the breakdown of the target population by status. The table revealed that of the 187 (100.0%) respondents, seven (3.7%) were academic staff, 179 (95.7%) were students while one (5%) of the respondents did not indicate the status. From the table, it was revealed that students used the library most. Table 2 revealed that of the seven (100.0%) academics who used the library, 5 (3.7%) were male academics, 2 (28.6%) female academics while 62 (34.4%) of the 180 (100%) students were male and 118 (65.6%) were female. This indicated that more male academics used the library than the female academics while female students have the highest number of usage.

Table 3 showed that of the 187 (100%) respondents, 62 (33.2%) were from the College of Humanities, 87 (46.5%) were from the College of Management Sciences, 35 (18.7%) were from the College of Natural Sciences while 3 (1.6%) did not indicate their college. This indicated that majority of the users were from the College of Management Sciences. When the participants were asked to indicate how often they used the library, 4 (57%) of the 7 (100%) academic staff as shown in Table 4 said they used the library very often, 2 (28.6%) indicated that they used the library often while 1 (14.3%) said he did not use it often. 115 (63.9%) of the 180 (100%) students who responded to the question that sought to know how often they used the library said they used it very often, 59 (32.8%) stated that they used the library often while 13 (7%) of the them said they did not use the library often. This clearly revealed that majority of the participants that used the library very often were students. When the participants were asked if it was easy for them to obtain materials on current research areas in the library, a majority of them as revealed in Table 5 indicated that it was easy. More than half 101 (54%) of the total participants agreed they easily had access to current materials on current research areas, 50 (26.7%) disagreed that it was easy to access materials on current research areas while 36 (19.3%) were indifferent. The figures presented in Table 5 therefore showed that more than half

Table 3. Breakdown of participants by colleges.

College	Frequency	Percent (%)
Humanities	62	33.2
Management sciences	87	46.5
Natural sciences	35	18.7
Total	184	98.4
No response	3	1.6
Total	187	100

Table 4. Frequency of respondents' use of the university library.

Frequency of use	Academic staff	Percentage (%)	Students	Percentage (%)
Very often	4	57	115	63.9
Often	2	28.6	59	32.8
Not often	1	14.3	13	7
No response	0	0	0	0
Total	7	100	180	100

Table 5. Perception of access to materials on current research area.

Perception of access	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agreed	101	54.0
Disagreed	50	26.7
Indifferent	36	19.3
Total	187	100

Table 6. Process of obtaining needed information for research from the library is promptly.

Process	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agreed	76	40.6
Disagreed	75	40.1
Indifferent	36	19.3
Total	187	100

of the participants easily had access to current research areas in the library. From Table 6, 76 (40.6%) of the total participants agreed that they obtained the needed information from the library promptly. 75 (40.1%) disagreed while 36 (19.3%) were indifferent. This showed that only an average number of the participants were actually satisfied with the time taken to obtain information in the library.

On participants reaction to the question on time and ease of ordering materials not available in the library, 27 (14.4%) of the 187 (100.0%) agreed that time taken was insignificant and obtaining materials was easy. 91 (48.7%) disagreed, 60 (32.1%) were indifferent while 9 (4.8%) did not respond to the question (Table 7). This revealed that majority of the participants found it difficult to obtain materials that were not in the library. When the participants were asked if the library environment was conducive for learning,

168 (89.8%) of the total participants agreed. 7 (3.7%) disagreed, 10 (5.3%) were indifferent while 2 (1.1%) did not respond to the question (Table 8). This clearly shows that the library environment was conducive for learning, teaching and research activities. In Table 9, 139 (74.3%) of the 187 (100%) agreed that the library staff were efficient in discharging their duties. 24 (12.8%) disagreed, 22 (11.8%) were indifferent while 2 (1.1%) did not respond to the question. The data presented therefore indicated that the library staffs were efficient. Of the 187 (100.0%) participants, 109 (58.3%) agreed that the staff of the library provided relevant and personalized services. 32 (17.1%) disagreed, 44 (23.5%) were indifferent while 2 (1.1%) of the participants did not respond to the question that sought to know if the library staff do provide relevant and personalized service (Table 10). This implied that the participants perceive the services of the library staff to be

Table 7. Ease of obtaining materials not available in the library.

Ease of obtaining materials	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agreed	27	14.4
Disagreed	91	48.7
Indifferent	60	32.1
No response	9	4.8
Total	187	100

Table 8. Respondents' perception of the library environment.

Perception	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agreed	168	89.8
Disagreed	7	3.7
Indifferent	10	5.3
No response	2	1.1
Total	187	100

Table 9. Respondents' perception of the library staff efficiency.

Perception	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Agreed	139	74.3
Disagreed	24	12.8
Indifferent	22	11.8
No response	2	1.1
Total	187	100

Table 10. Respondents' perception of the library services.

Perception	Frequency	Percent (%)
Agreed	109	58.3
Disagreed	32	17.1
Indifferent	44	23.5
No response	2	1.1
Total	187	100

satisfactory. Table 11 summarized the comments of participants on the library employees and services to the university community. 6 (3.2%) of the 187 (100%) participants asked that the academic staff of the University should be encouraged to visit the library. 12 (6.4%) suggested that the library staff should smile whenever they were approached for assistance. 8 (4.3%) said that the library staff were nice, that they responded to them promptly. 16 (8.6%) suggested that relevant textbooks should be provided for the various courses offered in the university. 6 (3.2%) said the library staff were sometimes slow when attending to them.

22 (11%) commented that a conducive environment should be provided for reading in the library. 3 (1.6%) said more computers should be provided for the virtual library. Out of the 187 participants, 86 (46%) did not provide comment to the question.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that users' satisfaction is a function of the quality of staff and services of a library. This implies that user-satisfaction with services in libraries which are well-stocked and the materials properly arranged and manned by well-qualified experienced staff would be significantly higher than user satisfaction with libraries with less qualified and impolite staff. Users will always be encouraged to make use of the library where the quality of services rendered to them will help to satisfy their requests. The study also revealed

Table 11. Respondents' comments on library employees and services to the university community.

Comments	Frequency	Percent (%)
Recommend the academic staff to visit the library.	6	3.2
The library staff should smile when we approach them.	12	6.4
The library staffs are nice; they respond fast to queries.	8	4.3
Relevant textbooks should be provided for different courses.	16	8.6
The library employees are sometime slow when attending to users.	6	3.2
Conducive environment should be provided.	22	11
More computers should be provided in the virtual library.	3	1.6
No response	86	46.0
Total	187	100.0

that provision of relevant information materials, access point and conducive environment for learning, teaching and research lead to an increase in the use of library. These findings confirm the earlier findings of Simmonds and Andaleeb (2001), Abagai (1993), Martensen and Gronholdt (2003), King (2005) and Hiller (2001). These studies observed in their findings that with qualified and experienced library staff, quality services are rendered to users who will always be encouraged to visit the library again. These studies also found that if services rendered to users correspond with their needs, if users' needs are identified and satisfied and if easy access point to library resources is provided, if conducive environment is created for teaching and research activities, readers will be encouraged to visit and use the library resources frequently.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that users of Redeemer's University library were satisfied with the library services, however, there is need for improvement in the services provided by the library. The study has provided data on the perception of academic staff and students about the library staff. The purpose of this study is to enable the library to improve on the services it renders to the university community as stated in the questionnaire used for this study. This paper will be helpful to libraries to improve library services especially in assisting academic staff in teaching and research. This study will be made available for the university library management for implementation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study was carried out to examine user satisfaction with academic libraries services in Redeemer's University library. The study was aimed at identifying who among the academic staff and students used the library mostly; identify the college that used the library mostly; to find out

the level of frequency of their use of the library; the level of ease at which users obtain needed materials from the library and examine the level of users' satisfaction with the library services:

- i) The management of the Redeemer's University library should ensure that users have input in what the library would stock.
- ii) The management of Redeemer's University library should seek audience with the academic staff on what the library should provide.
- iii) The user community should be adequately informed of what materials were available on the library website.
- iv) The management of Redeemer's University library should endeavor to seek the opinion of users as to how the library services could further be improved.
- v) The management of the library should intensify effort in enhancing the internet access in the virtual library.
- vi) The Redeemer's University library management should organize in-house training for staff to further improve the quality of their services.
- vii) Students should be sensitized to the importance and type of materials in the library during library orientation and how they can use the materials for assignment and research work.

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