

Information-Seeking Behavior and Library Use of Faculty of Agriculture Lecturers in University of Nigeria, Nsukka

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to determine the level of usage of Faculty of Agriculture Library resources by Faculty Lecturers, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The population of the study was fifty-five and questionnaire was used to collect data. Out of fifty-five faculty lecturers, thirty three returned completely filled copies of the questionnaire and these were used for the study. Two approaches were adopted in the study. The first approach relied on commitment measures to identify how often the faculty lecturers patronized the library. The second approach used quantitative techniques to identify resources consulted by faculty lecturers as well as challenges associated with seeking information in the library. Findings of the study revealed that patronage of faculty library was very low as a result of constant internet fluctuations, dated library resources and preference of lecturers to access internet in their homes and offices. Encouraging lecturers to patronize the library optimally required increasing internet band width as a panacea to constant internet fluctuation in the faculty library, updating library resources and adopting marketing strategy by the faculty librarian. The study provides an insight to library administration on very low patronage of the faculty library as well as datedness of the resources therein. Among recommendations of the paper were that there should be constant internet access to enhance work efficiency of the Faculty Librarian to render better services to users and encourage regular patronage as well as library resources' usage by Faculty Lecturers. Revelation from this study should make library administration to address the issue of internet fluctuations.

Keywords: Faculty of Agriculture Library, Faculty Lecturers, Faculty Librarian, Nigeria, Library administration and Information-seeking behavior.

Introduction

The Faculty of Agriculture, University of Nigeria Nsukka and its Library took off in 1960 when the University was established. It was the period when the country was mainly agrarian and sales from agricultural products were central to the Nigerian economy. The Faculty was mandated to teach and conduct researches in agriculture. Olufolaji (n.d.) posits that agricultural research provides information for policy makers and funding agencies. It also provides transfer of research-induced technology to farmers. This is the only way to measure research benefits to society. In compliance with this observation, the

Faculty engaged in agricultural extension programmes which enabled it to sustain healthy university environment and as a corporate, social and community responsibility. To advance the course of research, the Faculty Library was charged with the responsibility of providing most current information in agricultural sciences. In those days, the library was a beehive of activities overseeing the information needs of staff and students of the faculty. Information then could be easily obtained from books, journals and micro-fiches contained in the library. Librarians then occupied a place of importance in the faculty as they acted as the bridge between the information contained in the library and faculty members. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the emergence of the World Wide Web and Internet revolutionized storage and dissemination of information. The content of the library also increased in formats and currently includes e-books, e-journals and online databases like DOAJ (Directory of open access journals) and AGORA (Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture) that offer full text journals free of charge on the Internet. The librarian's role as information gate keeper was revolutionized. Faculty members could have access to library-based information anywhere and at any time by just a click on the library website through their computers. Cline & Haynes (2001) observe that increasingly, consumers engage in health information-seeking via the internet. These brought about a change in the way faculty members source for information. Many rarely visit the library. It then behooves Faculty of Agriculture Librarians to study the information-seeking behavior of faculty of Agriculture lecturers so as to identify ways of serving them better. Agosto & Hughes-Hassell (2005) opine that once librarians and other designers of information services understand people's natural information-seeking behaviors and preferences, they may mould their services and resources to conform to these patterns, thereby rendering better services to users. The works of Baker (2004) and Bruce (2005) amongst others have shown that the information needs of faculty members are job related specifically to teaching, research and publication and these in turn vary according to area of specialization. In the same vein, Patitumgkho and Deshpande (2005) opine that scholars, students and faculty actively seek current information from the various media available in the libraries for example, encyclopedias, journals and more recently electronic media.

Wilson (1997), and Magherat & Stock (2010) included gender as one of the intervening variables in information-seeking behavior. This observation was buttressed by Bassi & Camble's (2011) study which discovered that male students use e-resources more often than female students. One then wonders why the Faculty of Agriculture Library is rarely used by the lecturers in the Faculty of Agriculture. This work is therefore timely to address this issue.

This research is guided by the following research objectives:

- To examine the information-seeking behavior of faculty of Agriculture Members.
- To determine the type of information sources used by the faculty.
- To identify challenges associated with seeking information in the faculty library by faculty lecturers.
- To find out the relationship between the academic qualification/status of members and information-seeking pattern of faculty lecturers..
- To find out the relationship between years of working experience and information

source use

- To find out the relationship between gender and information source use

Significance of the Study

The study will be beneficial to Faculty of Agriculture Library Administration as it will reveal the best way of attracting the faculty to visit and make use of the library. It will also help the administrators of the library to match every information source procurement arrangement with need. It will as well help to forge a closer cordial relationship between the faculty and the library.

Statement of the Problem.

Libraries are the store houses of information. They constitute the hubs around which all teaching and learning revolve. Unfortunately, the statistical record of use of the faculty of Agriculture Library, University of Nigeria, Nsukka shows that 0.17 %, 0.36 %, 0.36 %, 0.30 % and 0.35 % of library users were lecturers of the faculty during 2006/2007, 2007/2008, 2008/2009, 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 academic sessions respectively . One then wonders how these lecturers are able to carry on with teaching, learning and research without recourse to the library. A research on the information- seeking behavior of the faculty is therefore needed to address the issue. Landau (1969)quoted in Nnadozie and Nnadozie (2008) posits that testing the usefulness of existing information resources and increasing the use of older works is one of the reasons for user studies. This work is therefore timely to address this issue.

Theoretical foundations of the study

Two theories guided this study. They are:

- a. Theory of uses and gratification - which states that information seekers search out a medium of information delivery that best fulfils the needs of the users.
- b. The theory of least effort-which states that an information-seeking client will tend to use the most convenient search method in the least exacting mode available.

Hypothesis

H_0 ₁ There is no significant difference between academic status of faculty members in Agriculture and their information-seeking pattern.

H_0 ₂ There is no significant difference between working experience and Information use of Faculty Lecturers

H_0 ₃ There is no significant difference between information source use and gender of Faculty Lecturers.

Literature Review.

Researches abound on the information-seeking behavior of faculty. It has been acknowledged that user studies, of which studies in information-seeking behavior is one, have important implications on the availability of information and the development of libraries. Heinstrom (2000) opined that user studies

enable libraries and librarians to make information readily available to the customer. The quest to update one's knowledge base has forced people to search out information in various formats. It has been observed by Zhang (1998) that a thorough understanding of user information needs and behavior are fundamental to the provision of successful information service. Also Davison and Langman quoted in Akinola (2009) suggest that the understanding of information needs and information-seeking behavior of various professional groups is essential as it helps in the planning, implementation and operation of information systems and services in work settings. The proliferation of Information and Communication technology has greatly affected the information provision landscape. Gleeson (2001) observed that in seeking information, people choose the retrieval method that provides them maximum amount of useful information in the minimum amount of time. The author posits that electronic journals are the most used information source and that most researchers access the library's web pages when in need of a library service before they venture to the library physically. Patitunkho & Deshpande (2005) posit that textbooks and journals are the most popular information source among faculty in Rajabhat, University Bangkok. Haines, Light, O'Malley and Delwiche (2010) examined the information-seeking behavior of basic science researchers and discovered that the researchers used a variety of information resources ranging from popular internet search engines to highly technical databases. The authors observed that basic science researchers were highly collegial, interacting primarily with co-workers in their laboratories and colleagues employed at other institutions. It was further observed by the authors that the researchers made little use of traditional library service and instead performed many traditional library functions internally. Bhatti (2009) discovered that a considerable majority of teachers are not satisfied with the current stock of books, journals and databases related to their fields as they find them inadequate for their educational and research needs. The author further noted that when confronted with an information need, faculty members turned to a knowledgeable person or colleagues in the field, only very few turn to libraries and library staff.

Wilson (1997) suggests that gender is one of the intervening variables in information-seeking behavior. This observation was buttressed by Bassi & Camble's (2011) study which discovered that male students use e-resources more often than females. Magherat & Stock (2010) posit that men use scientific databases more often than women in cases where the databases are necessary. Nnadozie & Nnadozie (2008) studied information needs of faculty members in a Nigerian private university. The study identified monographs and journals as the main information sources used by faculty members. Akinola (2009) also investigated the information-seeking patterns and types of information sources used on the internet by lecturers in Faculties of Education in Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife and University of Ibadan. The study employed descriptive research method, using questionnaire for data collection. One hundred lecturers constituted the sample, comprising 54 from University of Ibadan and 46 from Obafemi Awolowo University. The study concluded that majority of the respondents from both universities sought information to update knowledge. Investigating the type of resources used by the faculty Kaushik (2002) studied the information-seeking behavior

of social science lecturers in Haryana. It was observed that social science lecturers visited the library regularly to use indexing and abstracting periodicals.

Topmost among the problems encountered while seeking information from the library are, shortage of computers, non-availability of materials on the shelf, lack of time to source for the materials and shortage of current journals (Patitumgkho & Deshpande, 2005; Nnadozie & Nnadozie, 2008; Bhatti, 2009). In a similar study, Adio & Arinola (2012) discovered that some of the problems that hinder people from obtaining information from the library are poor internet facility, unwillingness of library staff to assist in information search, inadequacy of computers in the library to surf the Internet and lack of access to current journal articles and thesis amongst others.

Methodology

Descriptive survey method was used to obtain data which revealed information-seeking behavior of Faculty of Agriculture Lecturers in University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Population of the study comprised fifty-five lecturers in the faculty and copies of a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers were used to obtain data from the respondents. Out of fifty-five copies administered to them by the researchers, thirty-three copies were returned, giving a response rate of sixty percent (60%).

The instrument used for the study is a questionnaire entitled," Information-seeking behaviors of Faculty of Agriculture lecturers in University of Nigeria, Nsukka". It contained forty-eight items in four clusters, excluding section one which was on demographic data. Items in the clusters were placed on a four point weighting scale.

The data collected were analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation. One way analysis of variance, (ANOVA) and t-test were used to test the hypotheses. The researchers collapsed years of work experience of lecturers into two categories, namely, 0-10 years and 11 years and above. This was done to be able to apply t-test to the cluster. The criterion mean of 2.5 was used as cut off point for items of clusters 2-4. Items that had 2.5 and above were accepted. The researchers also developed a scale for rating usage of library resources in cluster three as follows:

Mean score of 3.00 and above = highly rated

Mean score of 2.50-2.99 = moderately rated

Mean score of 2.00-2.49 = poorly rated

Mean score of 0.00-1.99 = very poorly rated

Three levels of academic qualifications, PhD, M.Sc and B.Sc, were used in the computation of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

In this study, faculty lecturers and member of faculties are used interchangeably.

Results and Discussion of Results.

Demographic Information

Respondents from faculty of Agriculture Library who returned copies of fully completed questionnaire were thirty-three. The number comprised eighteen males and fifteen female lecturers. Academic qualification of the lecturers ranged as follows: there were ten Bachelor of Science; six Masters of Science and seventeen Doctor of Philosophy lecturers. Years of working experience showed that eighteen had spent 1-5 years; four, 6-

10 years; three, 11 -15 years; six, 16-20 years; one, 21-25 years; and one, 31 years and above. Status of the lecturers revealed that there were twelve Graduate Assistants; four lecturers II; four lecturer IIs; seven senior lecturers and one Associate Professor. The faculty also had five Professors.

Information-seeking pattern of respondents.

Information seeking pattern of respondents showed that no lecturer sought information from the library daily. However, eight respondents visited the faculty library once a week, while twenty-one made use of the library rarely and four never sought information from the faculty library.

TABLE 1: Mean Scores of Respondents' Purpose of Using Faculty Library.

S/N	PURPOSE OF USING THE FACULTY LIBRARY	X'	REMARKS	
			A/NA	RANK
1	To read journals	3.15	A	1st
2	To consult textbooks	3.12	A	2nd
3	To check for research publications	2.76	A	3rd
4	To consult reference resources	2.57	A	4th
5	To read workshop and seminar papers	2.58	A	5th
6	To make use of dissertations and abstracts	2.49	NA	6th
7	To consult abstracts and indexes	2.42	NA	7th
8	To consult agric. databases	2.39	NA	8th
9	To consult conference papers	2.36	NA	9 th
10	To make use of Internet facility	1.82	NA	10 th
11	To make CD-ROM literature search	1.70	NA	11 th
12	To discuss with colleagues	1.18	NA	12 th

Key:

A = Accepted

NA = Not Accepted

Table 1 indicates that the lecturers' purpose of visiting faculty library was to read journals, to consult textbooks, to check for research publications, to consult reference resources, and to read workshop and seminar papers. These findings are consistent with the findings of Baker (2004) and Bruce (2005) in which the authors opine that information needs of faculty members are job related. The finding is also consistent with that of Nnadozie and Nnadozie (2008) in which it was opined that faculty members visited libraries to consult monographs and journals. Discussion with colleagues was not among the reasons faculty members visited the library. Simple observation around the library showed that the library had no conducive space for such discussions. Consultation of abstracts and indexes; use of internet facility; consultation of agriculture data bases, conference papers which are crucial academic activities of lecturers were also not among purposes for which lecturers visited the library. This finding is at variance with that of Kaushik (2002) in which the author states that faculty members visit the library regularly to use indexing and abstracting periodicals. The fact that faculty members could

download full text articles from the Internet at the comfort of their homes or offices made visiting the library to look for indexes and abstracts less attractive. This variance in finding is not a surprise. As of 2002 when Kaushik carried out the research, Internet usage had not penetrated the Nigerian populace as it has today. Internet World Stats (2011) observed that in the year 2000, there were about 200,000 (i.e. 1% of the population) Internet users in Nigeria, compared to 45, 039,711 representing 29% of the population in 2010.

Types of Information Sources Used by Faculty of Agriculture Lecturers.

TABLE 2: Mean Score of Information Sources Used by Faculty of Agriculture Lecturers.

S/N	RESOURCES	X̄	REMARKS	
			A/NA	RANK
1	Text books	3.18	A	1st
2	Journals	2.97	A	2 nd
3	Research publications	2.60	A	3rd
4	Reference resources	2.45	NA	4th
5	Dissertation and Abstracts	2.27	NA	5th
6	Conference papers	2.27	NA	5th
7	Abstracts and indexes	2.21	NA	7th
8	Workshop and seminar papers	2.18	NA	8th
9	Agrie databases	2.06	NA	9th
10	Internet facility	1.79	NA	10th
11	CD-ROM literature search	1.48	NA	11th
12	Discussion with colleagues	1.48	NA	11th

Table 2 shows that faculty lecturers make use of textbooks, journals and research publications. This fact is consistent with the findings of Patitungkho & Deshpande (2005) in which the authors stated that scholars, students and faculty actively sought current information from various media available in the library. The very poorly rated use of Internet facilities, abstracts and indexes in the library could stem from the fact that faculty members often accessed valuable information from the Internet, online databases and journals in their offices and homes. This phenomenon was observed by Okoye (2003) who states that availability of Internet facilities at cyber cafes, homes and offices would pose a challenge to university libraries in Nigeria.

Challenges Associated with Information-Seeking in the Faculty Library

TABLE 3: Challenges Associated with Seeking Information in the Faculty Library.

S/N	CHALLENGES	X	REMARKS		RANK
			A/NA		
1	I prefer using internet facility in my office to source for information	3.70	A		1st
2	Journals are not current	3.42	A		2nd
3	I depend on journal subscription and the Internet for information	3.33	A		3rd
4	Internet access in the Faculty library fluctuates.	3.21	A		4 th
5	Textbooks in the faculty library are dated	3.21	A		4th
6	Abstracts and indexes do not cover wide areas of research	3.09	A		6th
7	Agriculture databases are few	3.03	A		7th
8	CD-ROM literature collections are few.	3.00	A		8th
9	Conference papers are not available	2.97	A		9th
10	Reference sources are few	2.85	A		10th
11	I prefer using informal channels for acquisition of information	2.73	A		11th
12	Workshop and seminar papers are not available	2.70	A		12th
13	Discussion with colleagues in the library is rare because many do not visit the library	2.70	A		12th
14	There is ineffective faculty library service	2.67	A		14th
15	Research publications are not available	2.48	NA		15th
16	Dissertations and abstracts are mainly those of students	2.39	NA		16th
17	The faculty library is too crowded	2.39	NA		17th
18	Faculty library staff are uncooperative	1.67	NA		18th
19	Faculty library staff lack skills in information resource delivery	1.67	NA		18th

Table 3 shows that challenges associated with seeking information in the Faculty library by lecturers do not include; non-availability of research publications; availability of students' dissertations and abstracts, nor the faculty library being too crowded, nor uncooperative attitude of faculty library staff, nor faculty library staff lacking skills in information resource delivery. The four highest challenges pointed out by faculty lecturers as challenges associated with seeking information in the faculty were preference to use Internet facility in their offices; journals not being current; dependence on personal journal subscription for information and textbooks in the faculty library being out dated. This observation has also been made by Al-shanbari and Meadows (1995) quoted in Bhatti (2009) that faculties in developing countries prefer non-formal channels for

acquiring information because of inadequate and irrelevant library collections and lack of infrastructure amongst others.

Test of Hypotheses on Academic Qualification/Status, Working Experience and Gender on Information-Seeking Pattern of Faculty Lecturers.

Relationship between Academic Qualification/Status and Information-Seeking Pattern of Faculty Lecturers.

TABLE 4: Academic Qualification as a Factor in Lecturer's Information-Seeking Pattern.

Summary table showing one way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F. cal	P	F Critical
Between group	0.15	2	0.085688	0.2261	<0.05	3.32
Within group	11.37	30	0.3790			
Total	11.52	32				

Table 4 shows that f-test is not significant since f calculated is less than f critical. This implies that the null hypothesis is accepted. This means that academic qualification is not an important factor in information seeking pattern of faculty lecturers. It also implies that apart from academic qualifications, other factors such as enthusiasm to seek information, currency of information resources and conducive environment can compel faculty lecturers to visit the library often (Oyedum, 2011).

Relationship between Working Experience and Library Use of Faculty Lecturers.

TABLE 5: Years of Working Experience as a Factor in Use of Library Information Resources.

Summary table showing T-test between two independent sample means of years of working experience and use of Library Resources.

X̄ ₁	X̄ ₂	S ² ₁	S ² ₂	N ₁	N ₂	Df	P	t-cal	t-critical
2.34	2.16	0.8156	0.9443878788	11	22	31	<0.05	0.5	1.697

Table 5 shows that t-test is not significant since t-cal is less than, t-critical. So, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between years of working experience and information use is accepted. This means that years of working experience is not an important factor in use of library resources

Relationship between Gender and Information Source Use of Faculty Lecturers.

TABLE 6: Gender as a Factor in Information Source Use.

Summary table showing t-test between two independent sample means of gender and information use.

X̄ ₁	X̄ ₂	S ² ₁	S ² ₂	N ₁	N ₂	Df	P	t-cal	t-critical
2.28	2.25	0.93	0.97	18	15	31	<0.05	0.882	2.042

Table 6 shows that t-test is not significant since t-calculated is less than t-critical, So, the hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between gender and use of library based information resources is accepted. That means that neither the male nor the female gender can be said to be the greater user of library information resources.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings of the study, it could be concluded that core factors that discourage lecturers from visiting and making use of the Faculty library resources include access to the Internet facility in their homes and offices, out-dated books and journals, very few CD-ROM literature collection, few agricultural databases, few reference sources and unavailable conference papers. It could be said that resources and study environment at the library need to be enhanced.

In this study, it has been established that academic qualification is not an important factor in information seeking pattern of faculty lecturers. It is also established that years of working experience as a lecturer is not an important factor in use of library resources. Also established, is that gender is not an important factor in use of information resources. It then behooves the library to beef up its services and face the challenges posed by unstable internet access squarely.

In view of the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made.

(1) Increase in Internet bandwidth

The Internet facility access in the library fluctuates. Therefore, the University administration should increase the Internet bandwidth and ensure that enough bandwidth is assigned to the library to prevent clashing of wave-bands as many people at the library log on to the Internet at the same time.

(2) Updating the library Resources

The faculty librarian should liaise with the Dean of the faculty and the University Librarian so that action should be taken to update the library resources. The Library should procure resources from Food and Agricultural Organization and the Dean can solicit donations from International Organizations.

(3) Marketing the library

The Faculty Librarian should exhibit library marketing strategies in order to regain the confidence and anxiety of the lecturers to visit the library. Part of these strategies could be by way of publicly displaying current books and journals' titles as soon as they arrive.

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