Accessibility and Utilization of Reference Resources by Fisheries Undergraduate Students University Libraries in North- Central, Nigeria

Makinde, Osasu Theresa[1], Aba, Jane[2] & Ugah A. D.[3]
Francis Suleimanu Idachaba Library, University of Agriculture Makurdi Benue State-Nigeria[1,] Ambrose Alli University Library, Edo State-Nigeria[2], Francis Suleimanu Idachaba Library, University of Agriculture Makurdi Benue State-Nigeria[3]
abajane@auuekpoma.edu.ng[2], makindetheresa023@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose: *The study focused on extent of accessibility and utilization of reference resources by fisheries undergraduate in universities in North-Central, Nigeria.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *Descriptive survey design was adopted. Population comprised 1,630 fisheries undergraduates and 457 undergraduates were sampled. Research instruments was Questionnaire developed by the researcher titled "Questionnaire on Accessibility and Utilization of Reference Resources by Fisheries Students in Universities" (QAURSFSU). Response rate of 436(95.4%) was recorded. Data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages (%), mean ($\overline{X}$) and standard deviation (SD).Null hypothesis was tested using t-test at .05 level of significance.*

Findings: *Results revealed that reference resources were available but extents of accessibility and utilization were generally low. Majority of the fisheries students were constrained by inadequate professional reference staff, outdated and irrelevant resources and waste of time when searching for materials. Findings revealed that the null hypothesis was rejected which implies that opinions of fisheries students on accessibility and utilization of reference resources differed significantly.*

Implication: *The low level usage of reference informational resources among the undergraduates' fisheries students depicts low quality research output and consequently under production of fish products.*

Originality/Value: *The paper's originality lies in its position that availability does not guarantee automatic accessibility and use instead awareness and accessibility brings about utilization.*

Keywords: *Accessibility, Availability; Fisher folks, Reference Resources and Utilization*

Paper type: *Empirical research*

Introduction

University libraries are major access points in the provision of reference resources for quality teaching, learning and research. Reference resources are provided and accessible for use through indexing and abstracting services in print and electronic format. The ultimate goal of reference resources is to provide accurate and specific information in the shortest possible time. Reference resources are information bearing materials in personnel, prints and electronic form used by reference librarians to provide access to specific information for users. They include: personnel such as reference librarians, support staff; print materials such as: dictionaries, encyclopedias, research monographs, directories, biographies, almanacs; information retrieval tools such as indexes, abstracts, bibliographies, catalogues and electronic materials such as computers, projectors, CD-ROMS and internet, e-journals, database and e-prints.

Unlike other library materials, reference resources are special to users because they contain facts that have been brought together from varied sources which are organized for easy and quick access for specific use. They are not meant to be read from cover to cover or borrowed out of the library but are used as sources of finding precise information (Abdulahi & Mamza, 2014). Reference resources are gold-mines of the reference section, their value is inestimable to users who need them to obtain relevant information (Attama, 2013). Considering the nature of these resources on academic performance of students, there is need

for university libraries to employ skilled personnel with passion for humanity and services that will help provide easy access to reference resources if users could make good use of these rich resources.

Accessibility of reference resource is the extent users gain entry and use reference resources which are physically or electronically published in the bibliographic universe, to obtain specific and accurate information in the library through indexes, abstracts, bibliographies and catalogues. Azubuike (2014) views accessibility as the 'ability to gain access and benefit from some system or entity". The concept according to Azubuike, often focuses on the end (that is obtaining satisfaction from the product) and not the means.

Utilization of reference resources refers to the extent library users exploit and benefit from reference resources in different formats to satisfy their information needs. Effective utilization by students enhances knowledge and overall academic performance. Mucai (2013) stated that utilization is taking advantage of an item and benefiting from it. Thus, utilization of appropriate resources play an important role in the achievement of educational goals. Utilization determines the quantity and quality of information obtained and consequently, the quality of research output of users. Research output refers to fisheries student's performance in different academic areas such as examination, assignments, seminar papers, undergraduate project report as well as level of technical skill required for quality fish production.

Fisheries undergraduate students, popularly called "fisher folks" are subject specialists at undergraduate levels of higher institutions undertaking a course of study in fishes and other aquatic organisms as prawns, crabs, periwinkles, in partial fulfillment for the award of Bachelor degree in fishery B. Agric. (Fishery). The Fisheries Society of Nigeria (FISON) and Fishery academics mostly refer to any individual in the field of fishery as "The Basis for Quality Fish Protein Production and Sustainability". Fish is an important source of easily digestible high - quality animal protein (40% crude protein) which offers nutritional values compared to meat and other dairy products (milk). Fish is also an excellent source of Omega H3 fatty acids (fish oil) which is essential for brain development in human. Fish complements the high carbohydrate diets of many regions (FAO, 2007). Currently,

one billion people worldwide are reported to rely on fish as their main source of animal protein (Milestone & Lang, 2006). Health workers worldwide often advise on intake of fish for at least once a day to ensure good health and longevity. The focus of this study is on accessibility and utilization of reference services and resources by fisheries students in universities in North-Central, Nigeria. It is against this background that this study investigates the extents of accessibility and utilization of reference services by fisheries undergraduate students with emphasis on use of reference resources for research in universities in North Central, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Professionalism in fishery requires access to timely, specific, practical and productive knowledge which can be obtained through appropriate resources such as reference resources in university libraries. This will provide quick and specific information that will improve fishery education and ensure the production and sustainability of quality fish. Preliminary observations by the researcher revealed that undergraduates who constitute a large percentage of university library users, hardly ask questions that require the use of reference resources. Furthermore, reference shelves are always left unused while students cluster round other shelves in search of other categories of information resources especially textbooks and journals. The researcher also observed that reference resources retrieved from reading tables for shelving on daily basis are always very few. Fisheries students seems to be constrained by non-effective access to the use of appropriate information resources that provide quick answers to fisheries-based specific questions that could increase research activities. This implied that librarians or fisheries students could lack the required skills to retrieve and use vital information in the use of information retrieval tools such as indexes, abstracts among others or that the resources are outdated and irrelevant. Hence, accessibility and utilization of reference resources by fisheries students in some universities in North Central are not impressive. An investigation into this study is therefore important because when appropriate resources are accessible, the use of specific information that enhances practical / productive skill and knowledge in the classroom and fish farm cannot be overemphasized. For instance, direct or ready reference questions such as what is plankton

bloom? What is the effect of plankton bloom on fish growth? Consequently, the following questions beg for answers: Could it be that reference services and resources are available but not accessible for effective use? This perhaps have discouraged the use of the reference section in general which prompted this researcher to investigate on the extent of accessibility and utilization of reference resources by fisheries undergraduate students in universities in North Central, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main purposeof this study is to determine the extent of accessibility and utilization of reference resources by fisheries undergraduates in North-Central Nigeria. The specific objectives of this study include the following:

1. determine availability of reference resources for fisheries undergraduate students in universities in North Central, Nigeria.

2. ascertain the extent of accessibility of reference resources by fisheries undergraduate students in universities in North Central Nigeria.

3. determine the extent of utilization of reference resources for research by fisheries undergraduate students in universities in North Central Nigeria.

4. identify the constraints of accessibility and utilization of reference resources by fisheries undergraduate in university libraries in North Central, Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study sought answers to the following questions:

1. what are the reference resources available to fisheries undergraduate in university libraries in North Central, Nigeria?

2. what is the extent of accessibility of reference resources by fisheries undergraduate in university libraries in North Central, Nigeria?

3. to what extent do fisheries undergraduate students utilize reference resources for research in university libraries in North Central, Nigeria?

4. what are the constraint of accessibility and utilization of reference resources by fisheries undergraduate in university libraries in North Central, Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was formulated and tested at $\alpha = .05$ level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between mean rating of accessibility and utilization of reference resources by fisheries students.

Literature Review

Reference resources according to Popoola and Haliso (2009) are those information - bearing materials in print and electronic formats used in the library to answer specific and direct questions such as textbooks, journals, indexes, abstracts, newspapers and magazines, reports, CD-ROMS, database, the internet/E-mail, video tapes/ cassettes, diskettes, computers, and so on. The print and non-print materials used in satisfying reference queries are called Reference Resources denoted by "Ref" or "R". Reference services are carried out by Reference Librarians at a reference desk. These information materials are the raw materials that libraries acquire, catalogue; stock and make available to users. They are materials needed for reference and information services. Okiki (2013) defined reference resources as materials or books that are only meant for reference purpose. Reference resources according to Ogbuiyi (2015) include dictionaries, atlases, and almanacs e.t.c which are research tools that are used in writing papers or projects. Onifade and Sowole (2011) also defined reference resources as books, collections, or materials that are consulted in the library alone and not meant to be borrowed out, they are not to be read from cover to cover but to answer specific questions. Kumar (2008) asserts that reference resources provide answers to brief questions such as brief facts, statistics and technical instructions, background information or direct users to additional sources.

The concept of accessibility is important for effective utilization of reference resources. Okiki (2013) emphasized there is the need to have access to useful information resources in Universities and make effective use of them. However, information may be available but not accessible and utilized due to one factor or another. Ugah (2008) quoting Osundina who studied the relationship between accessibility and library use by undergraduate in Colleges of Education noted that the problem of Nigerian students is not the question of wanting to use the College library but whether or not the library can provide for their needs and whether there is

access to what is provided. Although online searching and electronic bibliographic database are not available in most subject areas which confirms that as information expands, the ability of the user to process it remains fixed (Seth and Parida, 2006). Most users often find it difficult to access important information from library resources even when they are aware that these resources are available.

The process of accessing information in the library is made easier through the use of information retrieval tools such as: abstracts, library catalogues among others. Mohammed (2011) suggests that access to information tools such as: library catalogues, indexes, abstracts, online catalogues, bibliographies, references at the end of the books, and published/ printed papers as well as "see" and "see" also reference, internet search engines as yahoo, Google helps to facilitate easy access to information. Utilization of a resource is the extent of use to satisfy a need. Utilization can be achieved if there is adequate access to information. Utilization of information resources and services is the practical and maximum use of library information resources and services identified by a user for the purpose of solving a problem (Adegboye, 2015). Uhegbu (2007) views utilization as the appropriate use of acquired information. In their study on utilization of reference books by students, Iroaganachi and Ilogho (2014) posit that utilization of resources

implies taking advantage of available resources. Proper utilization of reference resources by fisheries students can improve research and overall productivity of fisheries sector in North central, Nigeria. The utilization of digital resources and its application to information delivery in the libraries in the 21st century has opened up a wider horizon for fisheries scientists.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. Population of the study was 1,630 fisheries undergraduate students where 457 fisheries undergraduate students were sampled using purposive sampling techniques to select universities and students based on criteria of interest to the researcher which were: universities must have 400level and 500level fisheries students and universities must grant approval to carry out the study. The research instruments was a structured questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on Accessibility and Utilization of Reference Services and Resources by Fisheries Students in Universities" (QAURSRFSU). Response rate of 436(95.4%) was recorded and used for data analysis. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages (%), mean ($\overline{X}$) and standard deviation (SD) to answer research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test at .05 level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Availability of Reference Resources (N = 436)

Reference Resources	AVA	NA	Remark
	Freq %	Freq %	
Encyclopedias	421 (96.6)	15 (3.4)	AVA
Dictionaries	422 (96.8)	14 (3.2)	AVA
Biographies	423 (97.0)	13 (3.0)	AVA
Indexes	279 (64.0)	157 (36.0)	AVA
Abstracts	280 (64.2)	156 (35.8)	AVA
Encyclopedia Americana online	140 (32.1)	296 (67.9)	NA
Encyclopedia Britannica online	125 (28.7)	311 (71.3)	NA
Computers/printers	378 (86.7)	58 (13.3)	AVA
AGRIS	238 (54.6)	198 (45.4)	AVA
AGORA	225 (51.6)	211 (48.4)	AVA
FAO	120 (27.5)	316 (72.5)	NA
EBSCOHOST	87 (20.0)	349 (80.0)	NA
Average of percentage availability	**261 (60.0)**	**175 (40.0)**	**Available**

Table 1 shows frequencies and percentages of responses on availability and non- availability of reference resources.Result reveals that reference resources such as Encyclopedias has 421 (96.6%) and 15 (3.4), Dictionaries has 422

(96.8%) and 14 (3.2), Biographies 423 (97.0%) and 13 (3.0), Indexes 279 (64.0%) and 157 (36.0%), while Abstracts has 280 (64.2%) and 156 (35.8). However, Encyclopedia Americana On-line has 140 (32.1%) and 296 (67.9),

Encyclopedia Britannica On-line has 125 (28.7%) and 311 (71.3), while computers / printers has 378 (86.7%) and 58 (13.3). Also, AGRIS has 238 (54.6%) and 198 (45.4%), AGORA 225 (51.6%) and 211 (48.4), FAO 120 (27.5%) and 316 (72.5) and EBSCOHOST 87(20%) and 349(80%). Thus items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10 are available with percentages above 50% while items 6, 7, 11 and 12 are not available with percentages below 50%. The average percentage availability of reference resources is 261 (60.0%).

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of responses on extent of accessibility of reference resources. Results revealed that the extent of accessibility of reference resources such as: Encyclopedias is ($\overline{X}$ = 2.09, SD = 1.08), Dictionaries ($\overline{X}$ = 2.78, SD = 0.94), Biographies ($\overline{X}$ = 2.11, SD = 0.98), Indexes ($\overline{X}$ = 2.01, SD = 0.89) while Abstracts is ($\overline{X}$ =3.10, SD = 5.51). Also, Encyclopedia Americana Online is ($\overline{X}$ = 2.11, SD = 1.08) while Encyclopedia Britannica online is ($\overline{X}$ =1.99, SD = 1.03). However, Computers / Printers is, ($\overline{X}$ = 2.74, SD =0.94), AGRIS ($\overline{X}$ =2.10, SD = 0.99), AGORA ($\overline{X}$ = 2.04, SD = 0.89), FAO ($\overline{X}$ = 1.86, SD = 0.81) and EBSCOHOST ($\overline{X}$ = 1.8, SD = 0.8). The cluster mean for extent of accessibility of reference resources is ($\overline{X}$ = 2.23, SD = 1.25).

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Extent of Accessibility of Reference Resources (N = 436)

Reference Resources	Mean	SD	Remark
Encyclopedias	2.09	1.08	Low ext.
Dictionaries	2.78	0.94	Great ext.
Biographies	2.11	0.98	Low ext.
Indexes	2.01	0.89	Low ext.
Abstracts	3.10	5.31	Great ext.
Encyclopedia Americana - online	2.11	1.08	Low ext.
Encyclopedia Britannica – online	1.99	1.03	Low ext.
Computers/printers	2.74	0.94	Great ext.
AGRIS	2.10	0.99	Low ext.
AGORA	2.04	0.89	Low ext.
FAO	1.86	0.81	Low ext.
EBSCOHOST	1.79	0.81	Low ext.
Cluster mean	**2.23**	**1.25**	**Low ext.**

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Extent of Utilization of Reference Resources for Research (N = 436)

Utilization	Mean	SD	Remark
I use reference resources for research on my assignment	2.51	0.86	Great ext.
I use reference resources for research for examination	2.43	1.14	Low ext.
I use reference resources for research on my project work	2.42	1.02	Low ext.
I use reference resources for pleasure	1.98	1.79	Low ext.
I use reference resources to know more about people and events in the world	2.42	0.94	Low ext.
Cluster mean	**2.35**	**1.15**	**Low extent**

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of responses on the extent of utilization of reference resources in different areas of scholarly endeavour. Results revealed that the extent of reference resources for Assignment ($\overline{X}$ =2.51, SD =0.86), examination ($\overline{X}$ = 2.43, SD =1.14), project work ($\overline{X}$ = 2.42, SD = 1.02), pleasure ($\overline{X}$ = 1.98, SD =1.79) and to know more about people and events in the world ($\overline{X}$ = 2.42, SD =0.94). The cluster mean for use of reference resources in different areas is ($\overline{X}$ =2.35, SD= 1.15).

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation of responses on the constraints to effective access and use of reference services and resources in the library. The result revealed that inadequate professional reference staff ($\overline{X}$ = 2.76, SD =0.78), old and irrelevant resources ($\overline{X}$ = 2.75, SD =0.95), waste a lot of time ($\overline{X}$ =2.72, SD =0.86) were constraints that affected

access and use of reference services and resources in the library. While, lack of skill / knowledge on how to use reference resources ($\overline{X}$ =2.64, SD =0.74) and librarians are not user-friendly ($\overline{X}$ = 2.67, SD =0.91) did not affect

access and use of reference services and resources. Hence, the cluster mean revealed that there are constraints that affect accessibility and utilization of reference resources**.**

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Constraints to effective Accessibility and Utilization of Reference Resources. (N = 436)

Constraints	Mean	SD	Remark
Inadequate professional staff to assist me	2.76	0.78	Agree
There are old and irrelevant resources for my course.	2.75	0.95	Agree
lack of skill / knowledge by students	2.64	0 .74	Not Agree
I waste a lot of time when searching for materials.	2.72	0.86	Agree
The librarians are not user-friendly	2.67	0.91	Not Agree
Cluster mean	**2.71**	**0.85**	**Agree**

Table 5:t – test analysis of significant difference between accessibility and utilization of reference resources

Variables	N	Df	t	Sig	A	Remark
Accessibility	436	434			0.05	Significant
Utilization	436		32.806	0.00		

Table 5 shows that t- cal = (32.806) at P(sig) = 0.00 when the P (α) value is 0.05 and df = 434. Therefore, there is significant difference between accessibility and utilization of reference resources. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Discussion of Findings

Availability of reference resources for fisheries students

Results revealed that reference resources were readily available in the university libraries understudy. This implied that university libraries have the capacity to provide effective and efficient reference resources delivery to meet institutional goals of teaching, learning and research and as such, fisheries students can benefit from them to meet specific information needs. The findings agreed with Ogbuiyi (2015) that reference resources were available to the undergraduate students for maximum use in Babcock University Library, Ogun State, Nigeria. The result also agrees with Adegboye (2015) that information resources were available to users. Similarly, the findings correspond with Azubuike (2014) that the resources were available to the undergraduate students in Colleges of Education in Anambra and Enugu State, Nigeria. Findings are in tandem with Aba (2013) that electronic reference resources were greatly provided. However, these findings disagreed with Abdulahi and Mamza (2014) that reference resources were not readily available to the undergraduate students.

Extent of accessibility of reference resources by fisheries students

Results revealed that the extent of accessibility of reference resources by fisheries students was generally low. This finding supports the result of Adegboye (2015) that although information resources were available, they were not readily accessible for quality research. This also conforms to Azubuike (2014) that although reference resources were available but were not highly accessible for efficient use by students. Moreover, the opinions of fisheries students differed significantly in the accessibility and utilization of reference resources in North Central, Nigeria. This implies that the extent of accessibility determines the extent of utilization of reference resources. These findings confirmed Ugah (2008) that the extent of accessibility determines about 79.8% use of information resources. The findings of this study are surprising because despite the availability of reference resources, they were not accessible for effective use in university libraries.

However, it is interesting to note that the extent of accessibility of reference resources such as abstracts, dictionaries and computers / printers were not impressive in university libraries in North Central, Nigeria. This showed that conventional references services should be delivered with the effective use of computer technologies to reverse the declining nature of reference services hitherto experienced in North Central, Nigeria. Hence, electronic reference

services further assisted the users to get the right information at the right time, thereby saving their time and this goes a long way to improving user's efficiency thereby avoiding duplication of research to get new ideas. These findings agreed with Aba (2013) that the use of computer – based reference services can augment the current level of use of local information resources. From results on accessibility, the low extent of accessibility was perhaps attributed to constraints encountered by fisheries students such as inadequate, outdated and irrelevant resources or lack of skill by the students.

Extent of utilization of reference resources for research by fisheries students

Results revealed that the extent of utilization of reference resources by fisheries students was generally low. The findings negate purpose of reference resources because it is basically to assist users to locate and maximally utilize specific information for research. Besides, the extent of utilization is expected to determine the quantity and quality of information obtained for research output of users. Findings of this study are in accordance with Abdulahi and Mamza(2014) that majority of the undergraduate students utilized reference resources for assignment purpose. The findings of this study also confirmed Ademodi (2015), that assignment purpose recorded a great extent of use. Finding on extent of utilization of reference resources corresponds with Adegboye (2015) and Azubuike (2014) that the extent of utilization of reference resources was not impressive. However, the findings of this study negates the findings of Afebende and Ebaye (2008) that reference resources were mostly utilized by staff to prepare lecture notes for teaching. In the same vein, findings contradicted Iroaganachi & Ilogho (2012) that reference resources were used for undergraduate project reports. Furthermore, Findings did not conformed to Onifade, Ogbuiyi and Omeluzor (2013) that reference resources were mostly utilized for undergraduate project reports. Findings do not support Ogunyi, Efosa and Sheji (2013) that the use of reference resources was mainly for examinations. Results on low extent of utilization could be attributed to low extent of awareness and accessibility of reference resources.

Constraints of accessibility and utilization of reference resources

Results revealed that fisheries students in the universities under study were constrained by a lot of factors among which were: inadequate professional reference staff, outdated and irrelevant resources and waste of time when searching for materials. This implied that fisheries students were not satisfied with the reference resources offered by the universities under study. Findings agreed with Onifade and Showole (2011) that available reference materials were very old and not relevant for use. It also agreed with Afebende and Ebaye (2008) that challenges militating against the use of library resources were due to lack of current books, journals, E-resources, irrelevant database and materials. Results corresponded with Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) that the major challenges encountered by students were lack of professional staff and waste of time.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

1. Reference librarians in these universities, in collaboration with the library authorities should constantly organize library orientation and user education programs which include skill acquisition programs. This could enhance accessibility to required information.

2. Fishery students should be encouraged to use reference resources for research and other academic purposes since the Universities under study have the capacity to provide reference resources. This will to improve utilization of reference resources.

3. Constraints of inadequate professional staff encountered to render effective reference services to fisheries students could be addressed if reference librarians are encouraged to vigorously pursue continuous training programs through seminars/workshops and other professional education courses on reference resources to improve themselves and become relevant in their profession.

Conclusion

It is the conclusion of this study that fisheries undergraduate students in North-Central Nigerian universities lacked accessibility to reference information materials. This hitherto hinders them to use same. Usage was adversely low despite the availability of reference information materials on fisheries in the libraries. This situation is heralding low level of

research among fisheries undergraduate in universities in North-Central Nigeria.

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