The Effect of Library Orientation Programme on Use of Library Resources by freshmen and Women in the Federal University of Technology, Owerri

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Abstract

Purpose: The growing concern on the dropping students' patronage of academic libraries has necessitated this work. This study investigated the effect of library orientation on patronage of library/information resources by freshmen of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri.

Design: The paper is based on FUTO library efforts aimed at galvanizing a positive attitude of her fresh students towards effective use of the library resources. The data on the freshmen's information literacy and use of library was collected through questionnaire administered directly on them during the orientation programme.

Findings: The findings revealed that 1020(68%) out of 1500 freshmen do not use the library resources due to lack of awareness. Similarly 1020(68%) neither know about the library databases nor access them, while 720 (48%) use cell phone as major source of information. 750(50%) information needs of the fresh students were identified as current textbooks. Regular library orientation/information literacy programme, Current textbooks, Internet accessibility and uninterrupted power supply were identified as motivating factors for student's use of library resources.

Research Limitation/implications: The work though a case study of Federal University of Technology, Owerri, its result would form part of the University policy on information literacy and library use by fresh students. It would also form the basis for provision of adequate information resources/ services to meet the information needs of library clientele.

Originality/Value: The outcome of this study should not only be implemented but be sustained to enhance students' use of academic libraries which will in turn improve their academic performances.

Keywords: library orientation, Information literacy/awareness, Freshmen/students, Information needs, library resources, Information technology skills, Undergraduate, Lifelong learning.

Introduction

Academic libraries are information centres established in support of the core mission of their parent institutions to provide information resources in aid of teaching, learning and research activities of faculties and students. Academic libraries stimulate the mission of their parent institution to generate knowledge and equipped people with relevant information skill in order to serve the society and advance the frontier of knowledge.

Basic Literacy and information Literacy are two inevitable ingredients that are required to position one to be able to achieve one's life-long educational pursuit. Etim (2007) substantiated this when she defined basic literacy as individual's ability to read, write and speak in English Language; and information literacy as one's ability to recognize when information is needed and how to locate, evaluate, effectively use and communicate information in its various formats. Simply put, library orientation programme is a means of achieving information literacy which is predicated on actualizing ones goal and developing one's knowledge and potentials. It is also a "catch them young mechanism" aimed at inculcating in the new university entrants the appetite towards the use of library resources for their overall academic development. The exponential growth of information resources coupled with the increasing pace of information technology development in the present age has occasioned an urgent need for academic libraries to keep users abreast of search techniques with a view to aid easy retrieval

of information. Eisenberg, Lowe and Spitzer, (2004) reported that recent assessments of the role of academic libraries have brought out outcomes that establish the importance of information literacy skills, adding that reports on undergraduate education identified the need for more active learning whereby students become self – directed independent learners who are prepared for lifelong learning.

In the academic environment, libraries/information centres provide a standard interface for the members of the community. As the heart of campus, the library offers much more than books and a place to study. The library's work is to provide comprehensive resources and dynamic services to support the research, teaching and learning needs of the university community. Academic libraries must strive to provide the right amount of information to the right clientele at the right time. They are saddled with the responsibilities of provision of information materials to all strata of the academic community; hence they are trained to train others in information searching, retrieving, selecting, acquiring, organizing, preserving, repackaging, dissemination and service. However, the users can only be abreast with these resources and benefits when the librarians are able to furnish them with the appropriate information search skills and with the accuracy it deserves. Vijayakumar and Vijayakumar (2004) opined that libraries in addition to providing intellectual compass also provide happiness, mental joy and spiritual delight to those who exploit it. Library resources become redundant if they are not consulted. Therefore the librarian is keenly interested in encouraging and developing people to use the library resources.

First year is usually challenging to freshmen in the university. Adjusting to campus life and university's class activities can be overwhelming and frightening experience. Librarians do well to recognize that some freshmen have "library phobia"…they shy away from using the library, approaching a librarian or visiting the reference desk for inquiries. It is against this backdrop that the library of Federal University of Technology, Owerri took the initiative in combating the' library phobia' and to orientate the fresh students on awareness and use of library/information resources and services. The library orientation is designed to give a preview of all the library has to offer and as well help new members to navigate the library. Faculties are encouraged to bring new students for orientation where they are conducted to the library's wealth of resources.

Statement of the Problem

The library is the gate way to knowledge. Potential users of the library are assumed to be aware and capable of using the literature search tools (catalogue, indexes and bibliographies, etc), electronic search engines and available databases to locate the documents they need themselves. But often time students shun the library and this is perceived to be responsible for the dropping student's patronage of the library despite increasing library stock. Perhaps contrary to the assumptions, the freshmen may not possess the skill for information search and utilization of library resources hence the students information needs are not adequately met. Library orientation for freshmen is expected to be the antidote for increased students' information literacy,awareness and utilization of library resources.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To ascertain the extent of library awareness and use by fresh students of the Federal University of Technology, Owerri (FUTO).

2. To ascertain the information literacylevel of fresh students of FUTO.

3. To ascertain the information needs of fresh students of FUTO

4. To find out strategies to beadopted by library staff for increasing library awareness and utilization of information resources byfreshmen in FUTO.

Significance of the Study

The result of this study would form part of the University policy oninformation literacy and library resources awareness for fresh students. It would form the basis for provision of information services to meet the information needs of library clientele. It would provide useful data for University administration in planning for library resources and services.

Literature Review

Library orientation programme is designed to introduce students to the library's wealth of resources and as well strengthen their research skills and utilization. According to Kline and Rod (1984), the library orientation/literacy programme offers the first year students the library's resources and services as well as information on study skills

and academic integrity to help make their academic pursuit successful. Similarly, Starkey (2012) opined that library orientation help new students to meet Librarians and learn about the library's collections and services before beginning their courses. It is designed to help new undergraduates to quickly learn the key library services and research tools they will need to use during the first quarter of classes. The need for library orientation cannot be over emphasized. Thus when Kline and Rod (1984) conducted a survey involving 50 U.S Colleges and Universities and distributed questionnaires to ascertain the need for library orientation/ information literacy for newly enrolled students, the result was 98%.

Library orientation, user education/Information Literacy and Awareness

The effectiveness of library orientationmust be complimented with user education, information literacy/ awareness of available library resources. The chartered Institute of Library and Information Professional (2013), classified information literacy efforts, thus: knowing when and why you need information and how to communicate it in an ethical manner. These attributes of information literacy is highly desirable and could enhance student's academic output. Information literacy skills as a lifelong continuous learning process can be encompassed within the framework of the seven pillars of information literacy (Society of College, National and University Library, 2011). This model defines the core skills, competencies of information literacy development in higher education achieved through an individual's opportunity to develop progressively throughout their learning life. See figure 1 for seven pillar of information literacy.

Figure1: Seven pillars of information literacy model.
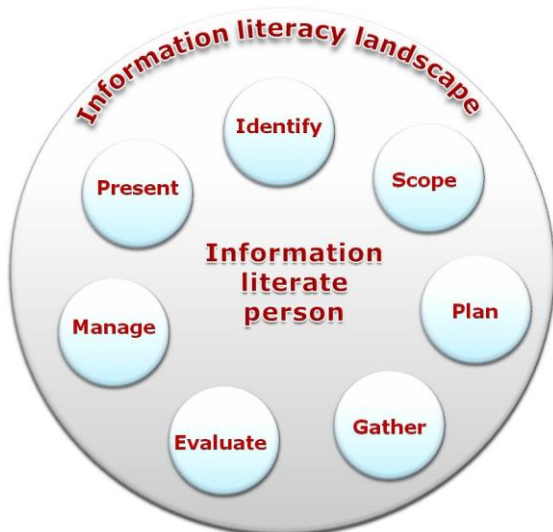
Source: *Society of college, National and University Library (SCONUL) seven pillars of information literacy model 2011 www. Utas.Edu. Au>library>tech>scon…..*

Identify – Identify any information need

Scope -   Defining and constructing strategies for location

Gather – Locate and access data and information

Evaluate – Compare and evaluate different Information resources

Manage – Organize, apply and communicate

Present – Synthesis and create new knowledge

Retrieve – disseminate to end users and feedback

The seven pillar model can be divided into two core sets of skills: knowing how to locate and access information (Information and Technology Skills) and knowing how to understand and use information (Library skills (Sayer, 2006). Basically, literacy skills 1 -4 serves as a tool that facilitates access to information and adapting it to the existing community, department and schools where needs are best identified (Sayer, 2006: 80). When needs are identified, it is important for all to have opportunity to acquire the skills in order to understand, participate and benefit from the knowledge base (Goldstein and Ford, 2002). The

awareness created by enhancing literacy skills by the use and ongoing lifelong learning process most often comes through orientation programmes, workshops and seminars. The librarian provides 21st century survival skills that enable individuals and groups to recognize their need for information as well as strategies to access and use them effectively.

Pillars 5-7 involve the efforts of the librarian in awareness – raising campaigns. This involves specialized expertise in translating their information in the best possible ways to be understood by clientele because of the diversity in communication style and language in different subjects and course study or repackage information to suit specific community needs. (Sayers, 2006: 81) The libraries role in raising information literacy/awareness is imperative as he/she is saddled with the responsibility of creating, handling- information learning skills and its use and management, modifying learning attitude and behavior to appreciate the role of information literacy in learning. The library at all levels upholds this standards, promotes

commitment to lifelong learning that will be needed to keep pace with change: This is the overarching power of information literacy, providing people with the skills to know when they need information and how to locate it and use it effectively and efficiently.

Research Method

The questionnaire instrument was designed to collect responses from fresh students during the orientation programme. A stratified random sampling was used based on 250 students per school. Out of a total student population of 3000 studied, a samplesize of 1500 (50%) were selected. The freshmen and women were grouped according to their schools namely; School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology (SAAT), School of Engineering and Engineering Technology (SEET), School of Environmental Studies (SOES), School of Management Technology (SMAT), School of Health Technology (SOHT) and School of Sciences (SOSC). 500 questionnaires were distributed to each group at their various venue out of which 250 were selected using random sampling.

Interpretation of Data and discussion of findings

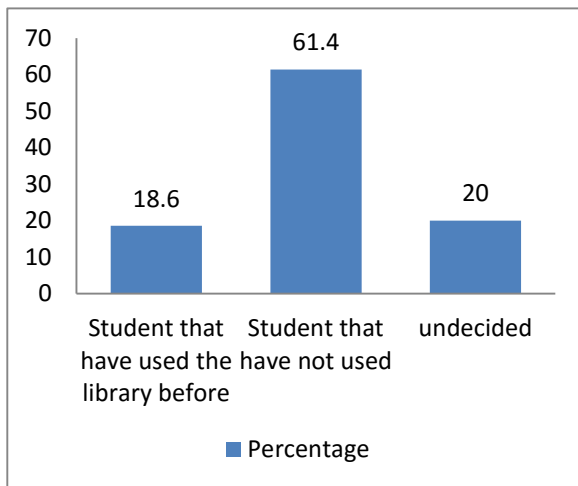**A. Library awareness and use**

Figure 2

Figure 3

Question 1: Have you ever used the University library?

The result shown in figure 2 that shows that 280 (18.6%) of students have used the library before, 920 (61.4%) have not used it while300 (20%) were undecided. This means that the majority of the fresh students have not used the university library before. The library has to work hard towards the interest of the 1220 (81.4%) who
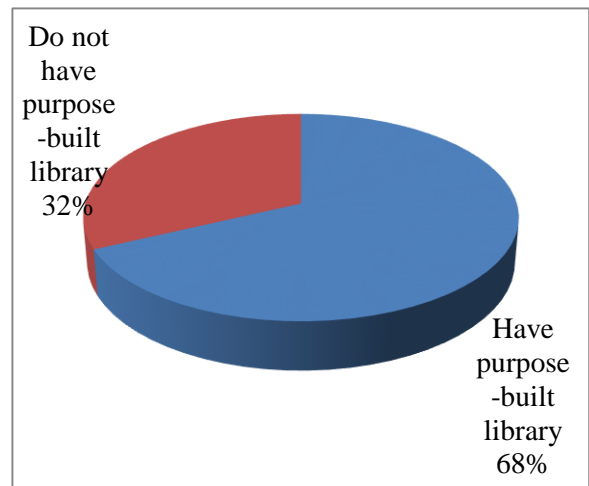
were not used to the library, while sustaining the interest of others.

Question 2: Do you have purpose-built library in the last school you attended?

Figure 3 indicates the response on the availability of purpose-built library in the respondents' last school attended, the figure shows that 1020 (68%) do not have purpose-built library whereas 480 (32%) do actually have purpose-built library in

their primary and post primary school. The implication is that majority lack library orientation.
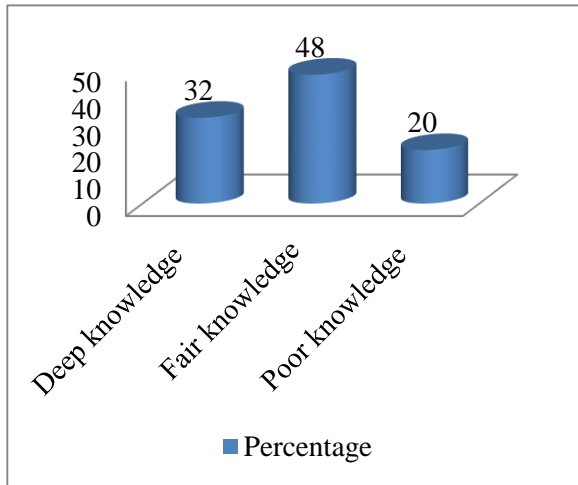
B. Information Literacy level of fresh students
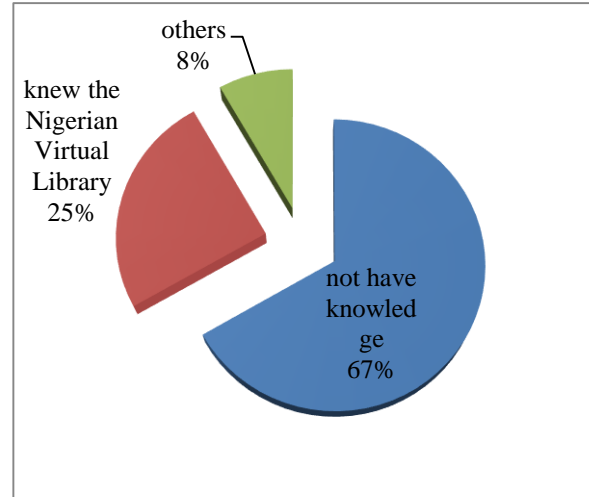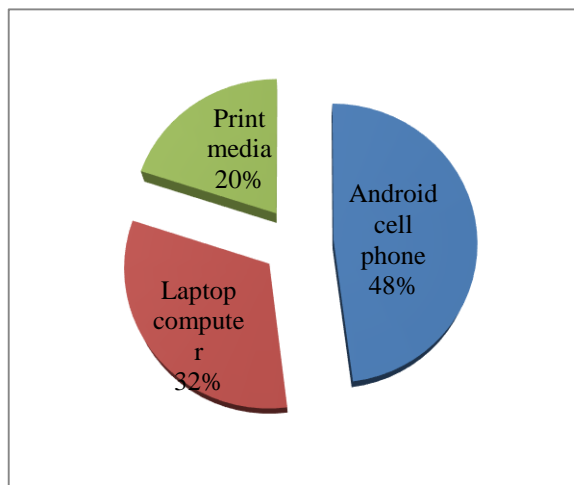

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Question 3: How would you rate your knowledge of computer?

The response in figure 4 shows that 480 (32%) have deep knowledge of the use of computer; 720 (48%) have fair knowledge of computer while 300 (20%) have poor knowledge of computer.

Question 4: Do you have knowledge of some databases that are relevant to your disciplines e.g. Access to Global online Research on Agriculture (AGORA); Health Internet Access on Research

Initiatives (HINARI); Online Access Research on Environment (OARE); Elsevier Science Direct; Nigerian Virtual Library (NVL)?

The response in figure 4 shows that majority 1000 (67%) do not have knowledge of any database that could be consulted to help them in their discipline; 375 (25%) only knew the Nigerian Virtual Library. The rest of the listed database are neither known nor accessed by 125 (8%) of the students.

Question 5: What major tools do you use in accessing information?

Figure 6 indicates that 720 (48%) use their android cell phone to access information; 480 (32%) use

laptop computer while 300 (20%) access only print media(textbooks, newspapers and magazines)

C. Library/information needs of fresh students

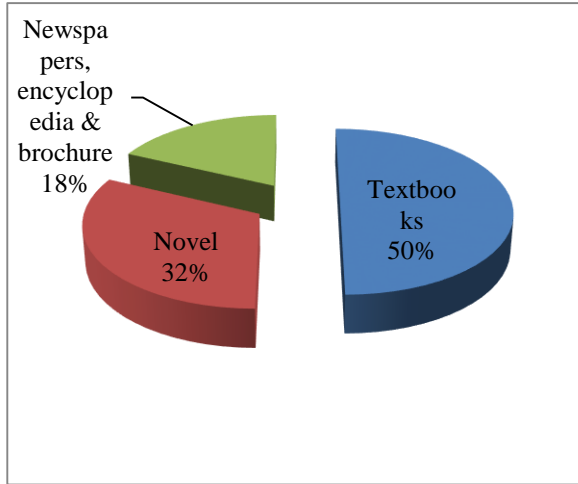**Question 6: What type of library resources do you like to consult most?**
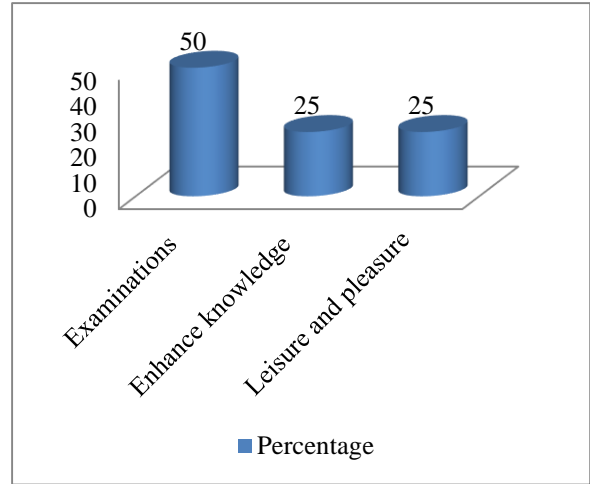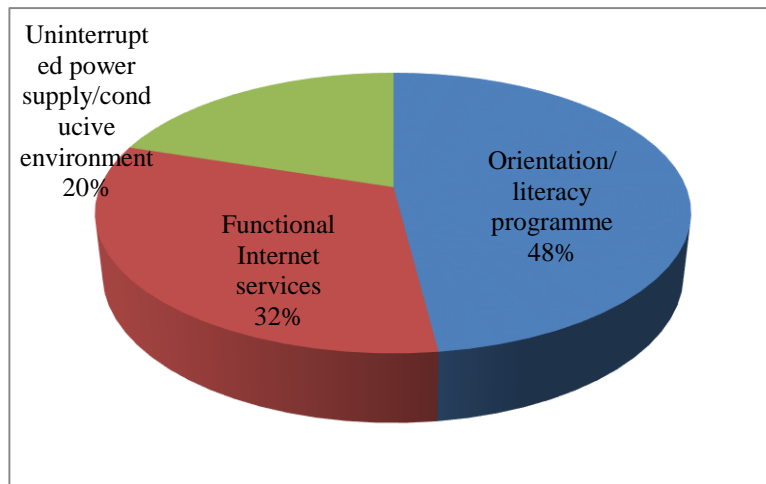

Figure 7

Figure 8

Figure 9

Data collected indicated that textbooks topped the list with 750 (50%) while novel ranked second with 480 (32%). The responses received for newspapers, encyclopedia and institution brochure were 270 (18%). This corroborates the earlier result that fresh students read mainly for examination.

Question 7: What are your reasons/purpose for seeking information?

Data collected shows that 750 (50%) go to library to read textbooks and notes for examinations only; 375 (25%) seek information to enhance their knowledge and prepare for future while 375 (25%) seek information for leisure and pleasure.

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D. Strategies adopted by library staff to create awareness and encourage library use.

Question 8: How can the library encourage students' use of its resources?

Responses gathered in figure 9 above shows that 720 (48%) of the fresh students advocated for continued library orientation/literacy programme; 480 (32%) opined availability of functional Internet services while 300 (20%) pinpointed uninterrupted power supply and conducive reading environment as necessary conditions to attract usage
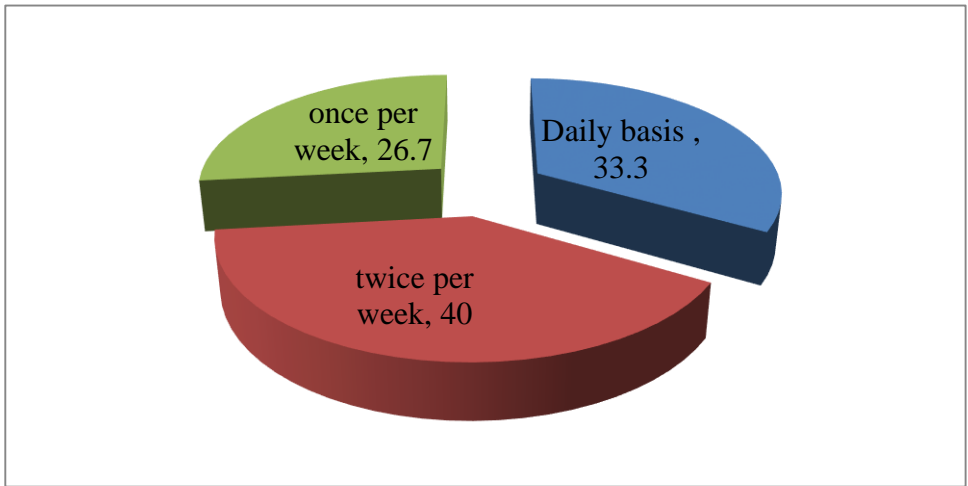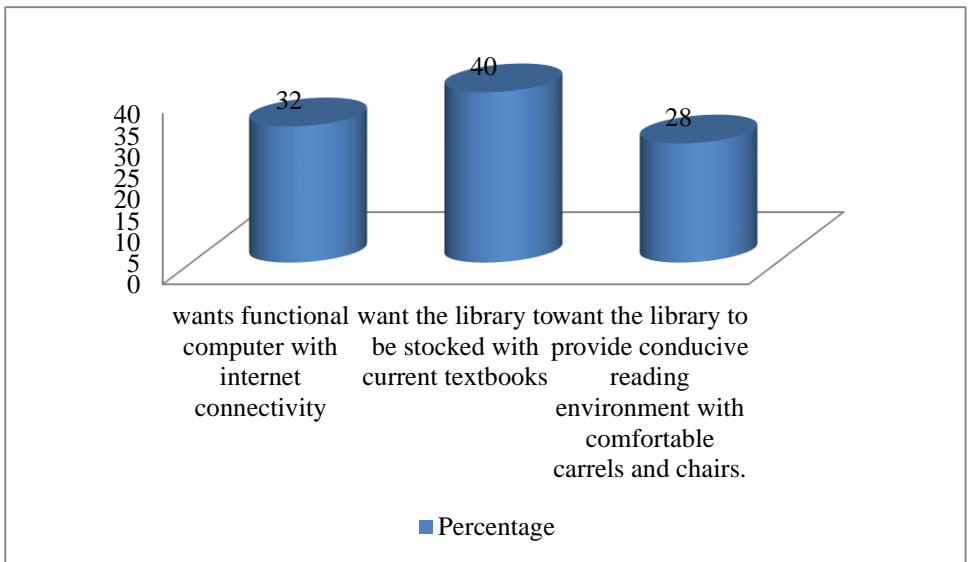
Figure 10

Figure 10

Question 9: How often would you like to visit the library to satisfy your information needs?

Figure 9 indicates that 500 (33.3%) would like to be visit the library on daily basis; 600 (40%) would like to visit the library twice per week; while 400 (26.7%) would also like to visit the library once per week.

Question 10: What facilities/resources would you like the library to provide?

Figure 10 above shows the facilities/resources the respondents would like the library to provide. The figure indicate that 480 (32%) wants functional computer with internet connectivity, 600 (40%) would want the library to be stocked with current textbooks while 420 (28%) would want the library to provide conducive reading environment with comfortable carrels and chairs.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the result of the analysis, the following conclusions were reached:

- that majority of the freshmen/women in FUTO have not used the library for any academic purpose before their entrance into the University and as such library orientation, user education/literacy programme should be vigorously pursued to enhance students use of library resources for their academic pursuit. Suleiman (2012),writing on "User education in academic libraries: the experience of the Islamic University Malasia", opined that majority of the students identified library orientation/ user education as veritable tool for enhanced library patronage. Oyesola

(1984) writing on "Instruction on the use of library: Problems and elements of effectiveness agreed that library orientation/user education enable students patronize the library.

- that many of the freshmen/women has knowledge of computer application but only a few use laptop computer to access information for academic purposes.
- That majority of the freshmen/women use cell phone as major means of accessing information whereas their information needs were identified to be reading of textbooks and notes for examination purposes.
- that majority of the freshmen/women has no knowledge of relevant databases in their disciplines or necessary skills to accesses them.
- that frequency of visit to the University Library would increase as library orientation, provision of conducive environment is sustained with steady power supply and Internet connectivity.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations were made:

- Library orientation/ literacy programme should be integrated into the curriculum of fresh students in order to enhance the use of library resources.
- Students especially freshmen should be exposed to on/off line database that are relevant to their discipline.
- Constant supply of power and Internet connectivity should be made a priority in the University Library in order to motivate and encourage users.
- Library votes should be reviewed upward to accommodate purchase of current textbooks, journals, magazines; newspapers which are relevant to students information needs.
- Regular interactions with students, willingness to help as well as friendly disposition to students should be adopted by library staff to enhance library patrons especially by freshmen/women.

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