EFFECT OF USER EDUCATION ON THE USE OF ONLINE DATABASES BY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA NSUKKA

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Abstract

Purpose: The research was designed to investigate the effects of user education on students' use of databases: a study of Postgraduate Students of Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The paper adopted a survey method using a questionnaire for data collection after reviewing related literature with a population of 200 students comprising postgraduate students of Library and Information Science in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, with a sample size of 20, representing 10% of the total population. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count to answer the research questions using mean score and rating scale.

Findings: The result revealed that the student's understanding of the concept of user education was accepted because they had a mean score above the mean of 2.5. It also recommended that adequate and qualified librarians be employed to teach user education programs using online databases to take care of the high population of postgraduate students of Library and Information Science at the University. The research concluded that the course content of the user education program should ensure that LIS PG students are exposed to various topics per the program's objectives.

Implication: The study deduced that the practice of user education in an educational environment has a positive impact on the students who received training in the program, thereby making them more effective and efficient in accessing the Library online database.

Originality/Value: The problems that militate against effective user education on student's use of online databases include Inadequate qualified Librarians (Staff), Inadequate Instructional materials and facilities, High cost of audiovisual materials, Negative attitude of students towards the program, unconducive Library environment and limited time allotted to the program etc.

Keywords: User Education, Online databases, Information Literacy Programme, Information literacy skills, Postgraduate students, Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria Nsukka.

Paper Type: Empirical research

Introduction

Libraries are made for use. This justifies the huge investment of its human and material resources (manually and electronically) and the Library's organizational structures and systems. Describing library use, Maduaka in Uwakwe et al. (2016) pointed out that it is the act of perusing the library stock, seeking and obtaining assistance from library staff, finding information and borrowing a book from the Library. It also includes studying one's material in the Library. Thus, all the activities carried out in the Library by the user, whether assisted or otherwise, to meet their information needs may be described as library use.

To a large extent, library use measures the effectiveness and efficiency of library resources and defines/informs the fundamental policy objectives of libraries. Ogunmedede and Emehara in Uwakwe, L. (2016) observed that no matter how large the stock of libraries is if the services and resources are not fully utilized, such a library will be a white elephant project. This underscores the proper planning and design of the facilities and the adoption of library policies to ensure appropriate and effective use of the libraries. One of these programmes is known as user education. User education is a process whereby potential users of the Library learn how to make efficient and effective use of the Library and its resources by acquiring knowledge and skills in identifying, locating, retrieving and exploiting information (Iheaturu, 2012).

The user's education here ranges from the instruction and the teaching from the reference librarian to the library users, asking reference questions, using reference sources and materials, and where and how to locate them. These can be information sources like; reference materials, online library databases, library catalogues, and all library information materials.

It is the role of the Library that all the users should get their information needs as quickly as possible to save time for the user. The librarian, a professional in information dissemination, always provides these services. For the librarian to fulfill this objective, he must implement many things that will actualize it: providing all the reference activities, sources, and services. This is why the librarian has devised the means of educating the users so that they can use the information sources and resources in the Library independently without the librarian's help or with minimal help from the librarian to bring about quick access to the information sources and to overcome daily.

An online database is a computer application delivered from the internet that stores and organizes data to make it accessible to users (www.yourdictionary.com). It is a structured data collection that users can easily access, organize, update and manage via the internet (www.caspio.com>online-database). The advent and advancement of technology as well as the development of computer systems, have given rise to an unprecedented increase in volumes of published materials, both in print and non-print forms and compelled modern libraries and librarianship professionals to pursue and adopt new-age tools and methodologies in the discharge of its activities. For instance, libraries have embraced the digital age and adopted several electronic methods and devices to discharge library services. They include the online databases, the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), used for online searches and cataloguing, internet devices for information /data search and browsing, and e-mail devices for library registration, browsing, etc.

Statement of the Problem

Most postgraduate students of the Library and Information Science Department at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka must be trained in library user education. Most must gain the essential skills to utilize the online library databases for effective academic performance. Similarly, most Library and information science postgraduate students need help to utilize online library databases because they need library user education. Why will postgraduate students of the Library and information science department need help to utilize online databases through library user education? Is it that they need help in understanding the concept of user education? Or do they need to receive the instruction on using the Library's online databases? For this to be solved, there is a need to ascertain the impact of user education on Library and information science postgraduate students' use of online databases

Amuche Maryrose ASOGWA [1], Michael Yil'ep DEMI[2], Gertrude Ada EZE[3], Mangbon Nvmu ELIJAH[4]
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and also find out the challenges of user education service in the Library and the strategies to adopt to overcome these challenges to enhance effective use of library online database resources. All these causes might lead to poor performance by the students if they are not adequately trained in the programe hence the need for this study.

Research Questions

1. What is your understanding of library user education as a course?
2. How does user education impact LIS PG students' use of online databases?
3. What are the challenges of user education services in the Library?
4. What are the strategies to adopt to overcome these challenges?

The main objective of this study is to determine the Effect of User Education on Students' use of Online Databases: A Case Study of Postgraduate Students at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Objectives of the Problems

Specifically, the study is intended:

- To perceive what library user education is to LIS Postgraduate Students
- To identify the effect of user education on LIS Postgraduate Students' use of online databases.
- Ascertain the challenge of user education services and online databases in the Library.
- Suggest strategies adopted to overcome these challenges.

Literature Review

Literature considered essential to this study is presented under the following sub-headings:

Concept of User Education

Library education is a strategy to convert non-users into habitual users by molding and equipping them with relevant skills, knowledge and attitudes that can reduce the discrepancies between the users and the materials or tools; its

significance for the Library cannot be overemphasized.

User education is the instruction given to readers to help them make the best use of the Library. Its core is to teach to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is the umbrella term to describe a range of activities – from essential guidance in library layout to the more formal, structured and systematized instruction programs- on the effective and efficient use of library materials (NUC, 2007). Husen 2003 in Madiako (2013), user education represents an attempt by librarians to teach students how to locate and use information effectively. This entails that library user (postgraduate students) must acquire skills in identifying information's purpose, location, and use. According to Sinh and Nhung (2012), online databases have become an essential source of information contributing to the quality of postgraduate research work. Hence, libraries have long advocated using scholarly databases because of their richness in educational materials (Mbabu, Bertram and Vamum, 2012) and provide access to online databases to support postgraduate research. Online databases are usually subscribed to by universities in order to support the research works among postgraduate students. Online databases, also known as electronic databases, are a collection of electronic information sources by publishers from various fields and disciplines and can be accessed through a computer network. Khan and Haridasan (2015) define Online databases as records of related digital information concerned with general information or any specific subject field, arranged in a uniform format to retrieve information easily through the internet or online networks. Online databases can also be defined as electronic collections of information accessible online, often containing journal articles.

Concepts of Online Databases

The online database is crucial as it is one of the core areas of the Library and information profession because it is all about the organization of knowledge, which in the long run, brings quick and easy access to information. Information seekers like students encounter challenges in online databases searching and user education. At the same time, university libraries have invested in online databases subscription and provide computer-based technologies so that students can access the services and encourage quality teaching, learning and research (Tsai et al., 2012). University libraries are losing vast sums of money due to students' difficulties in locating, evaluating, communicating, accessing, and using quality information during online database searching (Timothy, 2014).

- Resources Required for Online Databases
- Methods Employed for Online Databases

Problems associated with User Education and use of Onlinedatabases

Madhusudhan (2010) found that the significant problems in using online-database and user education were lack of user orientation, lack of printing facilities, low internet connectivity, unavailability of sufficient electronic resources,

and the high purchase price of electronic resource gadgets.

Other problems listed Ingutia Okeke and Dick (2010) observed the following as the major problems encountered by students in their use of online databases. They are download delays, failure to find information, Lack of search skills, high cost of access, power outages etc.

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study is the survey method using a questionnaire as an instrument for data collection. The study population is 200, comprising postgraduate students of Library and information students at the University of Nigeria Nsukka. The sample size is 20 representing 10% of the total population.

The questionnaire is the instrument for data collection. Frequency count was used in analyzing the data collected. The research questions were answered using a mean score and rating scale. Any mean above the scale or benchmark of 2.5 was accepted, while those below were rejected.

Findings

Research question 1: What is your understanding of library user education as a course?

Table 1: Distribution of responses on understanding the user education concept.

Concept of user education	SA	A	D	SD	X	Remark
User education teaches library users the organization of library materials	8	6	4	2	3	Positive
The concept of library user education is clear to me	9	7	3	1	3.2	Positive
Library user education helps me to build good library culture	12	6	2	0	3.5	Positive
Library use is taught in my school	13	3	3	2	3.5	Positive
It is designed to teach library users the rules and regulations of the library usage.	7	6	4	3	3	Positive
It is an instruction designed to enable library users make optimal use of the library	14	4	2	0	3.6	Positive
Grand Mean					3.3	

Amuche Maryrose ASOGWA [1], Michael Yil'ep DEMI[2], Gertrude Ada EZE[3], Mangbon Nvmu ELIJAH[4]
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Research question 2: How does user education impact LIS PG students' use of online databases?

Table 2: Distribution of responses on the impact of user education on LIS PG students' use of the online database.

Impact of user education on the use of online databases	SA	A	D	SD	X	Remark
I acquire knowledge on how to use the online catalogue	10	2	4	4	3	Positive
I acquire knowledge on how to use the library online databases	11	4	3	2	3.2	Positive
I acquire knowledge on how to make research using online databases	8	3	5	4	3	Positive
I acquire knowledge on how to do online searching	9	6	2	3	3.1	Positive
I acquire knowledge on how to identify useful online reference materials	7	6	4	3	3	Positive
I acquire knowledge on how to retrieve various information materials available in the library online databases.	9	5	3	3	3	Positive
Grand Mean					3.1	Positive

Research question 3. What are the challenges of user education services in the Library?

Table 3: Distribution of responses on the challenges of user education services in the Library.

Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	Remark
Inadequacy of qualified staff	12	6	2	0	3.5	Positive
Lack of instructional materials	10	4	3	3	3.3	Positive
High cost of audio vision materials	9	8	1	2	3.2	Positive
Students negative attitude to the programme	8	9	2	1	3.2	Positive
unconducive environment	7	9	1	3	3	Positive
Inadequate facilities	10	4	3	3	3.1	Positive
Grand Mean					3.2	

Discussions

Table 1 shows the students' responses to the concept of user education. All the items in Table 1 were accepted because they have a mean score above the mean of 2.5. The overall mean rating is 3.3, indicating a positive response to the questions. This result reveals that the respondents agree that they understand the concept of library user education programmes. This implies that they know what they can gain from the course.

The analysis in **Table 2** reflects the respondent's opinion on the effect of user education on their use of the Library's online databases. All the items on the table recorded a high response score with an overall mean rating of 3.1. This is above the Mean score of 2.5. This indicates that the course user education has positively affected the postgraduate students of Library and information science at the University of Nigeria Nsukka. The finding implies that postgraduate students of Library and information science at the University of Nigeria Nsukka can effectively and efficiently use their library online database resources.

Table 3 shows respondents' opinions on the problems hindering effective user education in the University Library. All the items in Table 3 recorded a high response rating with an overall mean of 3.2, above the mean score of 2.5. The analysis reveals that all the items in Table 3 are problems hindering user education in the University. Some of these problems includes a lack of instructional materials, inadequate and unqualified staff, and negative attitudes of students to the programme, an unconducive environment, and inadequate facilities.

Implication of the Study

This study therefore, can be deduced or entailed or implied that the practice of user

education in an educational environment has a positive impact on the students who received training in the programme, thereby making them more effective and efficient, mainly through the method of accessing their information needs as compared to those not trained.

Recommendation

To remedy these problems, as found in this study, the following recommendations are proffered:

- Adequate and qualified Librarians should be employed to teach user education programs on the use of online databases to take care of the high population number of Postgraduate Students of Library and Information Science, at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka
- Instructional materials such as audiovisual materials, public address systems and projectors should be made available and affordable for the programme.
- The course should be made more practical-oriented to complement the theoretical aspects of it.
- -A conducive and enabling environment should be available for the programme's teaching.
- Time allocated to the teaching of the course should be relevant.
- The course should be made compulsory, and more credit load assigned to it; this measure will check the student's negative attitude toward the program.

Conclusion

The Library has been described as the life wire and the pivot of academic activities within the University system. Its role in teaching and learning processes must be addressed. A user education program was introduced for the optimum utilization of the Library and its

resources. The primary objective is to inculcate in the Library user basic knowledge and skills to make efficient and effective use of the library resources. This study, therefore, dwelt on the effect of user education on students' use of online databases for postgraduate students of the Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

The study found and made the following conclusions:

- Postgraduate students of the Library and Information Science, University of Nigeria Nsukka have an understanding of the course user education
- The course content of the user education program ensured that LIS PG Students were exposed to various topics in line with the objectives of the program
- User education program has positively affected the Library and information science Postgraduate students' use of the Library online databases and academic performance.
- The LIS PG student's perceptions of the impact of the user education program is that it is very relevant to them both in their use of the Library and their academic pursuit.
- The problems that militate against effective user education on student's use of online databases include Inadequate qualified Librarians (Staff), Inadequate Instructional materials and facilities, High cost of audiovisual materials, Negative attitude of students towards the programme, unconducive library environment and limited time allotted to the programme.

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Amuche Maryrose ASOGWA [1], Michael Yil'ep DEMI[2], Gertrude Ada EZE[3], Mangbon Nvmu ELIJAH[4]
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