STOCK UTILISATION STUDY BASED ON USE OF CALL MARK IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

The assessment of use of library stock in university libraries based on class mark is hereby reported. It is aimed at showing that quest for balanced knowledge does not leave gap in resource development. The report shows that faculties' use of resources spread through all class marks. The books used in these libraries for a period of six months were classified and used for these analyses. They were taken from the shelves by the users and before re-shelving the class mark groups were recorded. While chart one shows the spread of the use, it was noticed that books from some call mark groups were not used at the period of this survey. Also it was possible to track records of frequently used materials which could be keyed into the data base preferentially.

Keywords: resource use, class mark, resource analyses, use study, departmental resources, library use, collection management

INTRODUCTION

The efficiency of academic information provision in university libraries in Nigeria is based on the use of the materials placed at the disposal of users. This can be achieved by critical evaluation of the performance of the libraries and resultant improvement that plugs the loopholes that may be discovered. All effort made by libraries to successfully circulate available materials that ensures efficient management of resources are aimed at providing conducive retrieval opportunities to the users. Users have several reasons why they patronize the library. Their being satisfied with the physical set up of the library contributes more in every aspect than all effort made to satisfy their needs. With adequate provision of necessary infrastructure, the staff focuses on how easily the users can access the available materials.

Librarians are worried whenever the use of their services drops. This is pointed to the need for research which will enable the library live up to expectation. Refusal to take users views into account when planning for the future of the library will damage the library's ability to compete and even sustain its services when there is decline in resource sharing with other departments in an institution. Library users are seen as independent umpire when the issues of meeting their needs arise. Users' needs provide solution that will save the library from serious isolation in an institution. Removing users from the librarians' attention is equally dangerous. Since events do not remain static, unexpected changes in user behaviours need to be monitored regularly.

The use of statistical records in the evaluation of library services generally, acts as a watch dog to monitor and detect progress. This is a vital tool that should never be neglected in the library profession. Where they are carried out regularly, they provide conditions on which library support (both financially and otherwise) could be based. Academic libraries as a matter of

urgency adapt a strategic orientation campaign in which creation and delivery of acceptable and satisfactory user service play a pivotal role. Librarians are compelled to always appreciate such indicators that will capture changes that occur regularly in their environment.

User education provides a level ground on which users and staff could meet. When effort is made to satisfy the users, their ability to find their way in locating resources comes supreme. Understanding the system of classification used by the library solves a lot of problem on meeting one's needs. Library classification is used to facilitate subject access. It helps to organize the subject catalogue. Libraries shelve their resources according to some library classification scheme to simplify subject browsing. As revealed by series of literature studies, there has not been much work done on identifying how library clientele use library resources in Nigerian universities based on assessment on class mark. Such information will be found useful when considering resources to be acquired.

Most universities in Nigeria use the Library of Congress Classification Scheme. This system groups the materials based on what they are about. The advantage of this is that books about the same subject are placed in the same area. This report has been designed to evaluate stock utilization based on the use of Library of Congress Class mark. The survey is based on University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University of Science and Technology Libraries both in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The exercise is aimed at displaying the limitless nature of knowledge. It is also to expose gaps in utilization of resources and provide reasons for the gaps. This surveys the faculties and the ways they use books from various class marks. It establishes a comparable phase between the books consulted, the faculties and the class mark from which consultations were made. This will also provide an order of priority ranking for resources heavily used and make them available for data based compilation.

STOCK UTILIZATION IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

User studies in libraries when done on a regular basis yields valuable result in providing services to users. Usually, information gathered represents an important advance in libraries' effort to actualize a formula for library use. The main force of attraction in user study of any type is hinged on user satisfaction. Elliott (1995) believes that the secret of winning users attention is based on encounter with the staff. Lukman (2008) stressed that well equipped libraries with adequate expertise is the most appropriate institution that is capable of performing the functions of a library.

These opinions put forward here show that even when a query remains unanswered, the user may feel satisfied if the encounter with staff was pleasant. West (2001) is of the opinion that the most effective use of satisfaction surveys is within individual institutions. However, comparative studies can provide ideas for continuous improvement of services which could improve other libraries elsewhere. Ceynowa (2000) carried out a survey and came up with the conclusion that in exceptional cases, library users' expectations may be unrealistic or the resources to provide help may not be available. The work then suggested that discussion in favour of the customer be balanced against the library's resources and potentials.

Any user who receives satisfactory answer to requests is usually compelled to repeat such visits when next in need. They are forced to travel to libraries they have hope on. Aspiring to build up what is discovered to be lacking in a library helps boost the image of such a library. Some unrealistic requests may emanate from wrong presentation of requests by users. Further enquires into these requests often yield good results. Nitecki and Hernon (2000) stated that accessing the importance of attributes and perceptions of service delivered are relative and were indicators

of where priorities might be placed for improvement effort.

Is it really possible to have a sample of investigations that will be fool proof? Dellman and Bowker (2001) argued that in self - administered survey methods the display of questionnaires to library visitors lacks the statistical requirements of actively selecting a sample of persons representing all members of the survey population. Representative samples have often been used to arrive at useful conclusions in library surveys.

The desire for commitment on the part of users has been seen as a way of expressing interest in the service provided. Individual user registration with the library to access service could be interpreted to mean an expression of interest in the services. A very important feature emerging among university libraries is this need to improve and deliver better services. Zhang (1996) stated that to provide customer focused services; academic libraries must continuously monitor their environments.

They could develop variety of information access options for the users, selecting jointly those options that meet cost and efficiency criteria. Vasanthi (2002) suggested that instruction should be aimed at increasing user awareness of the library as a primary source of information and as a place to return to for assistance. This could be achieved through publicizing the library resources and the available services.

Elaborate study on the behaviour of library users was reported by Christensen - Delsgard (2006) where the users were classified into three groups. The first group of users is the drive-in users (use the library in a very good-oriented way) execute practical tasks, pick up books, print or photocopy materials. The second group of users is the worker bee (usually students rather than researcher). This group uses the physical space in the library to do their own work, but do not necessarily use other library resources while there).

Thirdly, the library enthusiast knows about and uses the library services and interacts with library staff. The drive in users seems to be at the apex of the librarians' desire. With developments in capturing the interest of other groups, it is hoped there will be a change in presentation of the other two groups. Focusing on how users will be able to gain access into the contents of digital libraries, Larson (1996) notes that whereas most early digital libraries projects were technology driven, there was little involvement of actual users.

However, this has changed with emphasis on user evaluation, but there is still need for better understanding of a wide variety of user (and non-user) population and their needs in searching and browsing digital libraries. Electronic development in libraries will continue to offer staff exciting methods of increased efficiency and effectiveness as they seek to communicate with large constituencies across extended areas of time and space (Johnson, 1998). Influence of electronics on the library continues to present attractive force that draws users to what can be offered. Blixrud (2008) suggested that outcome measures show how well an organization serves its users. A kind of indirect measure of quality and value can be done through the demand of users. Increase in demand implies increase in both resources and capability which will eventually lead to beneficial effect (Popoola 2009). These measures also demonstrate an institution's efficiency and effectiveness. When fully monitored they help to model pattern for improvement in service delivery.

Discussion on user satisfaction cannot be concluded without paying attention to the collection presented to users by the libraries. Lee (2005) was probing into what actually constitutes collection to a user and the librarian. User centered approach to the collection can overcome some challenges faced in developing resources. Information contributed by users' needs not be neglected but girded

jealously as they are loaded with ideas for success in collection development. Success or failure of the library collection to meet people's information needs may depend much on availability as well as accessibility.

Management of materials in libraries has a peculiar problem which users may not be aware of. Their reshelving materials to a different location and even withdrawal from shelves may be poorly understood by users. This makes it imperative that users should be given adequate instruction and assistance to be able to locate materials (Piternick 1972). However, Lincoln (2002) observed that when seeking for resources on site, library users want to be self-reliant or self supporting. They do not easily request for assistance.

The case of shelf re-arrangement has not yet been well understood by most users. Due to inefficiency in using call mark, many users are thrown off balance when they fail to see material at the location they had earlier found them. Obichere and Amaechi (2008) confirmed that students make use of library catalogue due to its usefulness, ease of finding needed information materials as well as knowledge of available materials.

On the criteria that students consider when selecting sources of information, Twait (2005) noticed that user's criteria is different when they seek information for personal use. They base their opinion mainly on what is available and convenient. They appreciate the ease with which they access what they need. Bradford (2005) advised librarians to be more familiar with available resources and be able to suggest reference materials to users when appropriate. The method of selective dissemination of information is still relevant in approaching users' needs. This will obviously build up the image that will attract users. Still searching for the best way to help users get at resources, Fields (2005) proposed designing information literacy assignment and curricula around more familiar audience early in the life of users as it will help them increase their self-efficacy in information search.

Derived ability to search for information as Bandura (2002) suggested can lead confidently into success when they search long enough. It is really essential that searching techniques be inculcated into the life of users. However, Harold and Shawn (2005) observed that there is a growing perception that the physical library is no longer so essential to the educational experience because users rely on the internet and technology for information sources. Gardner and Eng (2005) stated that because of alternative study locations students maintain, they no longer tie the resources traditionally associated with the library solely to the library. Whatever the intention of users, such visits to the library equally excite future use of the library.

METHODOLOGY

For this investigation, two universities were used. These are University of Port Harcourt, Choba; and Rivers State University of Science and Technology Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, both in Port Harcourt Rivers State of Nigeria. These are the only universities in this area that offer a wide range of courses. The number of materials consulted within the six month period and the department of the users were recorded for the survey.

Special slips were designed to elucidate information from library respondents. These slips were deposited with the library assistants who usually interact with users. The slips were issued out only to users that have picked books from the shelves. The information requested to be filled on the slip included the author of the book/reading materials. The title of the material requested, its call-mark and the accession number were entered on the form. Also requested was the faculty/department of the user. The name of the user remained optional. This research was conducted for a period of six months.

The library users were made conscious of this exercise as

the assistants explained what the exercise was for as they picked the forms. The instructions were well adhered to as the users had to present the books picked to the assistants before they settled down. Also a tag was placed on each book collected to identify the number of times it was removed from the shelf. These record slips were then used for analysis. The average number of books consulted and their percentages were used for the analysis. In cases where the same courses are not offered in both institutions, such as in medicine, only information from one institution was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Information from the slips was transferred into spread sheet as recorded on Table1. This showed the faculties and number of books used in each Library of Congress Class Marks. The number of books used by each faculty was recorded (per thousand) on the sheet. Along the vertical axis is the total number of books used by the faculties. From the vertical totals, faculty of science used (2,641see chart 1) books which was 39.25% of all the books used within this period. Faculty of Management Science used the least (368 thousand or 5.47%). This horizontal total shows the number of books used per class mark. The highest was used from the class mark Q-Science, (3,552 thousand or 52.79%) while book from class marks M-Music, and Z-library Science, were not borrowed. Total number of books used was 6,729 thousand.

The class mark from which the highest number of books was used by the faculties was illustrated in the graph shown on Chat 1. It shows the class mark from which the faculty members used the highest number of books. While faculty of science used the highest number from Q-Science, (2,034 thousand or 77%) faculty of Education used the least from class mark K- Law (181 thousand 38%).

The books used were sorted into their various class marks.

Chat 2 shows a graph of the number of books used from each class mark. The books used from class Q-Science, was the highest in number (3,552 or 52.79%) of all books used. While the books from class N- Fine Arts, had the least number used (38 thousand 0.56%). The resulting figures were again checked, based on the number of books used by each Faculty as shown on Chat 3. On the whole, faculty of science used the highest number of books when compared to all other faculties (2,641 or 39.25%) but faculty of Management Sciences had the least (368 or 5.47%).Probably the difference may be due to variation in the work load on the users at that period.

The figures from both institutions were merged and their average used. As stated earlier, in the case where the subject is not offered by both institutions, only the figure from one institution was used. The spread sheet on all the scores recorded in table 1 showed that in each faculty, there was a cluster of figures towards the subject area of great interest to the course of study. This showed that for every group of subject interest, there was concentration based on interest. While the Sciences clustered toward Science bases class-marks, the Arts subjects clustered towards areas related to different class marks.

Humanities used most of the books from Class marks P and B (Philosophy and linguistics). However, they still used some Science related materials. In the same way almost all Science related faculties used the highest number of books from class Q-(Science). The reason for this may be that they used the library within this period more than other faculties. The next task was to find out why one in, say Social Science used books on T (Technology). Similarly, those in the Sciences also used books on Philosophy, Class mark B (Psychology).

For balanced academic attainment, users consulted books from all class marks based mainly on interest and commitment.

Some users are interested in broadening their knowledge and so diversify on subject areas of interest at a particular time. Others are compelled to diversify due to academic requirements that make it mandatory for people to also study to acquire balanced knowledge. The teaching of general study/elective causes which has been imbibed by all academic institutions requires that one should diversity into almost all areas of study. This will surely produce balanced graduates that can adapt to challenging situations.

The tags placed on the books to monitor their rate of circulation turned out to be a good guide on marking essential titles that could be targeted for keying into the OPAC system preferentially. The major implication of this study is that it draws attention to consideration of call marks when decision on acquisition is brought into focus. Also this information will be vital in consideration of weeding process.

CONCLUSION

The above is a good guide to those involved in book selection for institutions of higher learning. Concentrating on a specific subject area in collection development deprives users the opportunity to access materials outside their immediate fields. While establishment of departmental libraries is a good idea, it's worthwhile to balance these stocks to include specific subjects that are not particularly departmental. Marked books were re-circulated a number of times. The physical state of such books also showed that they were heavily used. They could easily be referred to as essential and could be keyed into the net preferentially.

It is clear that request for departmental resources needs to be balanced in favour of adequate intellectual emancipation. Consideration of call mark in resource display is vital to the services provided to users because many of them who do not understand the intricacies of book shelving often get lost in identification of

their needed materials. Non consultation of books from the class marks 'M and Z' does not mean that these classes are irrelevant. It only shows that the requests for them were not made within the period of this investigation. Low consultation of books from some faculties like Management Sciences may portray the effect of departmental libraries on the main library. It may also mean that the users at this period made more use of other sources. The limitation to this survey is that it was done in only South Southern State of Nigeria. Further investigation of the situation in other universities could be the next line.

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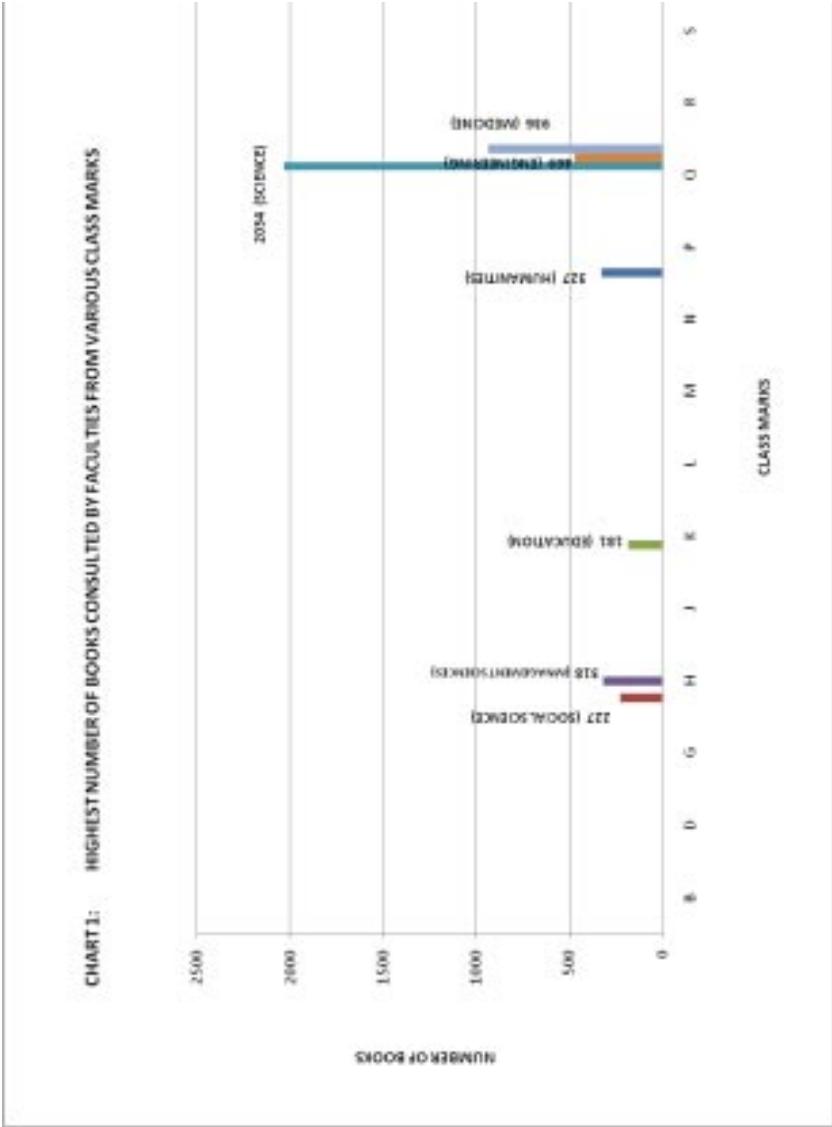

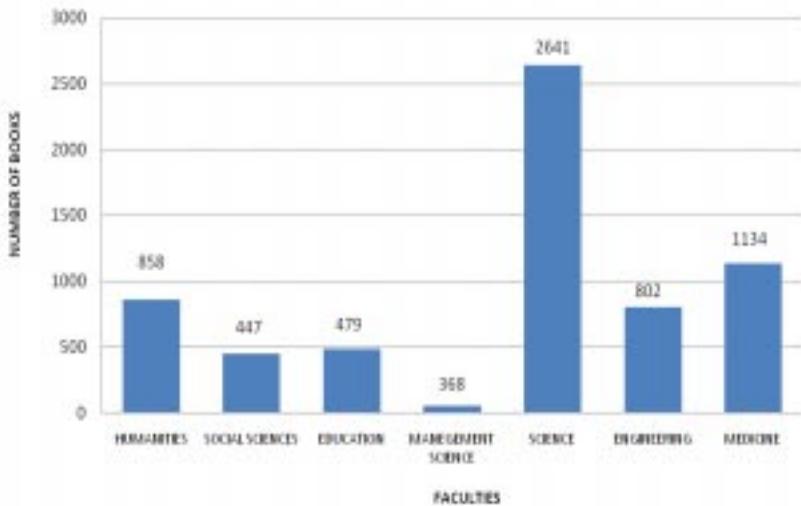CHART 1: HIGHEST NUMBER OF BOOKS CONSULTED BY FACULTIES FROM VARIOUS CLASS MARKS

CHART 3: TOTAL NUMBER OF BOOKS CONSULTED BY FACULITIES

Table 1: Faculties and books used from various class marks

	Hum.	So Sc.	Edu.	Mgt Sc.	Sc.	Eng.	Med.	Total
				FACULTIES				
B	3.48 (234)	0.24 (16)	0.39 (26)	0.01 (1)	0.10 (7)	0.60 (4)	0.10 (7)	4.38 (295)
D	1.56 (105)	0.19 (13)	0.07 (5)		0.13 (9)		0.04 (3)	2.00 (135)
G	0.05 (3)	1.14 (77)	0.73 (49)	0.60 (4)	0.28 (19)	0.03 (2)	0.24 (16)	2.52 (1.70)
H	1.23 (83)	3.37 (227)	1.49 (100)	4.73 (3.18)	0.34 (23)	0.13 (9)	0.30 (20)	11.59 (7.80)
J	0.30 (20)	1.23 (83)	0.10 (7)	0.07 (5)	0.12 (8)	0.01 (1)		1.84 (124)
K	0.60 (4)	0.07 (5)	2.69 (181)	0.21 (14)	0.03 (2)			3.06 (206)
L	0.43 (29)	0.07 (5)		0.60 (4)	0.22 (15)	0.09 (6)	0.10 (7)	0.98 (66)
M								
N	0..55 (327)	(1)	(17)	0.01 (8)	(231)	(7)		0.56 (38)
P	4.86 (327)	0.01 (1)	0.25 (17)	0.12 (8)	3.43 (231)	0.10 (7)		8.78 (5.91)
Q	0.12 (8)	0.22 (15)	1.22 (82)	0.12 (8)	30.22 (20.34)	6.97 (4.69)	13..91 (936)	52.79 (35.52)
R	0.10 (7)	0.06 (40)	0.09 (6)		0.25 (17)		2.01 (135)	2.51 (1.69)
S			0.03 (2)		0.42 (42)		0.09 (3)	0.69 (4.7)
T	0.01 (1)	0.01 (10)	0.60 (4)	0.07 (5)	3.48 (234)	4.52 (3.04)	0.10 (7)	8.26 (556)
Z								
Total	12.75 (8.58)	6.64 (4.47)	7.12 (4.79)	5.47 (3.68)	39.25 (26.41)	11.92 (8.02)	16.85 (1134)	6729