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IMPACTS OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES ON ADULT LEARNERS: A SURVEY OF GANDHI RESEARCH AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS

Odunlade, Racheal Opeyemi
University of Lagos library, Akoka - Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This is an interdisciplinary survey that married education with librarianship by evaluating the impacts of Gandhi Research and Bibliographic section of the University of Lagos library on its users who are mainly adults. Questionnaire and observation technique were adopted. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using figures, tables, percentages, and charts. Chi- Square Test was also applied in data interpretation. Results showed that the library has rich and adequate collections that are relevant to users' academic pursuit. It further revealed the need for current and up-to-date journals in all areas of academic endeavour. Also, the need to extend days and hours of opening to include Saturdays to allow users who have tight schedules in their places of work access to this library after the official closing hour was reiterated. The study further revealed the need for more staff to ensure all round and adequate services. Newspapers and Magazines should be available to users on daily basis. Recommendations on how to further improve the services were given.

Key words: Interdisciplinary, Education, Librarianship, Research, Collections.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries as reservoirs of knowledge no doubt has affected knowledge transfer in time past and is still impacting lives educationally, traditionally, economically, politically and socially. As custodians of documented societal values, culture and tradition, libraries have been involved in knowledge transfer from one generation to the other. Public libraries help individuals and communities "get started" and "keep going" on a wide range of activities. Public libraries also help individuals to advance and maintain community development. (Linley and Usherwood, 1998). Having said this about public libraries, does the same view hold for research libraries?

This study discussed the impact of research libraries on adult learners with a focus on adult students / researchers that patronize Gandhi Research and Bibliographic section of the University of Lagos Library.

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Gandhi Library which is named after the late Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948), an important leader for independence and a great Indian nationalist came into being officially on 2nd October, 1968. It houses the research and bibliographic collections of the University Library. Its collections at inception were furnished from a donation (£ 25,000 pounds) made available by the Indian Government and Community in Nigeria, so also some artifacts. The library is to cater essentially for all shades of research needs in the University and to this extent the collections include rare and expensive books, periodicals, government publications, thesis and dissertations, maps and atlases; newspapers, the library and private papers of Chief Oladipo Solanke, Warden and Secretary of West African Students Union (WASU) London, acquired by the library and imported from London in 1968. Also, the private papers and collection of the Rt. Rev. S.I. Kale, the retired Anglican Bishop of Lagos which were generously donated to the library on March 19th, 1975. The library also houses research materials on Africa and other areas.

The nucleus of the University of Lagos Archives which consist of University's official publications, releases and students publications are contained there; so also publications from other Universities. Admission to the use of this collection is limited primarily to postgraduate students and academic staff from both within and outside the University community. Undergraduate students may also use it with special permission. As of today, the library has well over 23,000 volumes of books, 650 serial titles and 3,500 monograph records, over 2,500 maps and thousands of micro text.

As an adult student ventures into the library to work on class assignments and / or conduct research, they often feel as though they are entering a different library world altogether from the one they were used to only a few years ago. This new library furnished with online public access terminals, electronic databases, CD-ROMs and Internet computers instead of a card catalog can often be intimidating to the adult student who outside the educational environment has not been required to use computers often, or never at all (Bontenbal, 2000). However, Lorenzen (2000 – 2004) in his pedagogical approach to adult learning and academic libraries posits that adult learners have assumptions and views about what the libraries means to them and this shapes their view of what to expect from it. Against this backdrop, one may begin to wonder who an adult learner is.

An adult learner as defined by Marks and Elsdon (1991) is any person who has completed his/her initial education (including any further or higher education whether full or part time, immediately following school) and who has now returned to learning, whether to obtain any sort of certificate, or pass an examination, or to pursue any work -, career - connected, personal or

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recreational objective. Research libraries as the name implies are libraries established to serve the reading interest of a particular group of people in the society. Research libraries are found mainly in educational and research institutes to meet the need of researchers in that given institution who incidentally are adults. The same description goes for research units of academic libraries which in most cases cater for the need of researchers within the academic community.

According to Wikipedia (2008) a research library normally contains an in-depth collection of materials on one or several subjects including primary sources as well as secondary sources. It affirms that large University libraries are considered research libraries, and often contains many specialized branch research libraries. This definition succinctly describes most academic libraries especially University libraries in existence, and in-fact gives an accurate description of the library under study.

Providing information that supports the educational programs of their parent institutions and the research needs of students and faculty is the primary objective of academic libraries. This is further buttressed by Lindaver (1998) who asserts that the teaching – learning role of academic libraries is well established as are the expectations of accreditation agencies that libraries connect their evaluation of collections, resources, and services to educational outcomes. Today, the teeming patrons of the research library which is fast changing from youths to young adults / adults are beneficiaries of these roles as it supports teaching – learning in order to achieve their ultimate goals.

Although there have been strong links between libraries and adult education historically, they have become more tenuous over more recent years. The adult learner in the academic environment faces some unique problems and challenges. Balancing work, family and a job are just a few examples. Technological changes in information retrieval and research and in the use of the library can also magnify the adult learner's problems (Simmonds, 2000).

Many definitions exist on the concept of adult learners/ students but Marks & Elsdon's (1991) definition of an adult learner seems to be more appropriate and applicable to the topic under discussion. It says "any person who has completed his/her initial education (including any further or higher education, whether fulltime or part time; immediately following schools) and who has now returned to learning, whether to obtain any sort of certificate or pass an examination, or to pursue any work, - career connected, personal or recreational objective. Awonor and Ezema (2001) corroborate this when they

technology than in the past (Fox, 2000). Lastly, adult learners unlike the traditional students use the library to better themselves. Majority of them already come from positions of respect and have comfortable incomes. Hence the motivation to use the library is from within since they are not using the library to please a professor, if the library helps them to get what they want; they will use it (Bowden and Merrit, 1995).

Having considered the positive impacts, it will not be out of place to examine a few negative impacts that libraries may have on adult learners in the context of this study. Veal (2000) confirms that adult learners most of who return to school with conflicting emotions do so for specific purpose; even at that, they often suffer from a high degree of anxiety over their new role as students. This may prevent them from asking for help or even getting the best from library resources. Of course in this era of information technology the computerized library of today poses many challenges for both adult students and librarian. Bontenbal (2000) in his work concludes that adult students are confronted with a library environment over run by computers, each requiring different skills to operate. Lack of competence in computer literacy may have adverse effect on students' use of the new library furnished with on-line public access terminals, electronic databases, CD-ROMs and Internet computers instead of a card catalogue. Aside this, research has shown that adult students expressed concern about issues like library hours, library resources and library staff attitudes amongst others. Fox (2000) and Simmonds (2000) reveal in their studies respectively that adult learners desire longer library hours. They want the libraries open till late evenings and on weekends to enable them maximize its usage. Also, current and up-to-date materials should be made available in the local libraries especially journals since relevant research materials are often available in journal articles (Simmonds, 2000).

Adult learners want to be seen as important people and so demand to be treated so. Not only that, they prefer been attended to by knowledgeable and courteous library personnel whenever they find themselves in the library. These prevalent factors have affected adult learners' use of library advertently. However, in all these; it is certain that adult learners do value the library (Bowden and Merrit, 1995). They have assumptions and views about what libraries mean to them and this shapes their view of what to expect from it

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive survey that was undertaken at University of Lagos with a focus on users of the Gandhi Research and Bibliographic section of the University of Lagos Main Library as the sampling size. The Patrons of this section of the library in a strict sense of it are lecturers, researchers and graduate

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students of the University and statistics has revealed that the total number of users that patronize Gandhi section on the average is about 12 daily, totaling up to about 72 in a week (Monday to Friday). Sample for this study was taken from the total population of users over a week and the sample size was 75% of the population which totaled up to 54 users. A cross sectional combination of structured questionnaire, and personal observation were employed to elicit information from the accessible population using cluster sampling procedure. Data were analyzed using tables, figures, frequencies and percentages. Also, charts and Pearson's Chi square tests were applied in data interpretation.

Research Questions

1. What category of adult students makes use of research libraries?
2. Of what relevance is the library to students' academic career?
3. To what extent does an average adult student patronize this unit of the library?
4. What are adult learners' views about the library environment, resources and services?

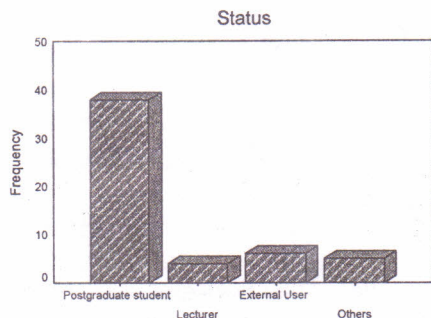
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS OF THE RESULTS

Questionnaire were administered on 75% of library users which totaled up to 54 users 53 were completed and returned; and this was done over a period of one week. Sex was not considered as long as users identified themselves either as a graduate student, a lecturer or a researcher. However, the result of the findings revealed that highest number of users is between the ages of 21 to 30years which gave a valid percent of 37.7; followed by others.

Question 1 Category of users

On category of users that patronize the library under study, statistics showed that postgraduate students who are mostly working class people topped the list scoring 71.7%; followed by external users who are either researchers from other Universities and private bodies scoring 11.3%; lecturers of University of Lagos with 7.5%; and others who did not specify their status scoring 9.4%. Of utmost importance here is that users are adults. Chart 1 below gave an illustration of this

Chart 1



Question 2 Relevance of library materials

Talking about relevance of library materials to students' academic career, the findings may not be complete without identifying first the kinds of materials that are available in this library and their rate of use by library patrons. Table 1, table 2 and chart 2 below showed the various resources housed in this library and the rate of consultation by users.

Which of these materials do you use in this section of the library

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Books	17	32.1	32.1	32.1
	Journals	14	26.4	26.4	58.5
	Thesis and Dissertations	10	18.9	18.9	77.4
	Government documents	4	7.5	7.5	84.9
	Documents emanating from International bodies	2	3.8	3.8	88.7
	Newspapers and Magazine	6	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 1

This table showed that books were mostly used, followed by journals, theses and dissertation, newspapers and magazines, and government publications in that order.

Furthermore, a status cross tabulation was carried out using Chi-Square tests of significance, setting alpha at 0.05%. The result showed that there is no association between rate of resource use and respondents status.

In other words, all the groups of users make use of the various resources available in this library; though the mostly used resources as indicated across board are books. Table 2 below showed the representation.

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Table 2: Cross tabulation of frequency of materials used by status

Which of these materials do you use in this section of the library * Status Crosstabulation			Status				total
Which of these materials do you use in this section of the library			Postgraduate student	Lecturer	External User	Others	
Books	Count		11	2	1	3	17
	% within Which of these materials do you use in this section of the library		64.7%	11.8%	5.9%	17.6%	100.0%
Journals	Count		12		2		14
	% within Which of these materials do you use in this section of the library		85.7%		14.3%		100.0%
Thesis and Dissertations	Count		6	2	2		10
	% within Which of these materials do you use in this section of the library		60.0%	20.0%	20.0%		100.0%
Government documents	Count		1		1	2	4
	% within Which of these materials do you use in this section of the library		25.0%		25.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Documents emanating from International bodies	Count		2				2
	% within Which of these materials do you use in this section of the library		100.0%				100.0%
Newspapers and Magazine	Count		6				6
	% within Which of these materials do you use in this section of the library		100.0%				100.0%
Total	Count		38	4	6	5	53
	% within Which of these materials do you use in this section of the library		71.7%	7.5%	11.3%	9.4%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.215	15	.130

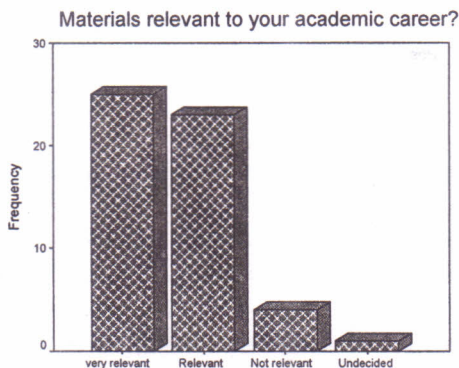


Chart 2

Chart 2 above showed the statistics of relevance of library resources. 47.7% of users affirmed that resources in this library are ‘very’ relevant to their academic career. Another group of 43.4 also agreed that the library materials are relevant to their needs.

Question 3 : Frequency of library patronage

How often do you patronize Gandhi section of the Library?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very often	18	34.0	34.0	34.0
	Often	21	39.6	39.6	73.6
	Rarely often	13	24.5	24.5	98.1
	Not at all	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total		53	100.0	100.0	

Table 3

IMPACTS OF RESEARCH LIBRARIES ON ADULT LEARNERS: A SURVEY OF GANDHI RESEARCH AND BIBLIOGRAPHIC LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS.

How often do you patronize Gandhi section ?

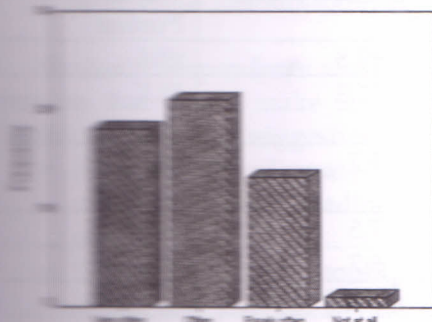


Chart 3

Table 3 above revealed that the numbers of respondents that patronize the library 'often' and 'very often' are higher than others. However, 1.9% affirmed no patronage at all. Their reason may not be unconnected to lack of awareness on the type of resources available in this library. This is further illustrated in chart 3.

Question 4 Users view of library services, resources and environment

Gandhi staff's relationship with library user's

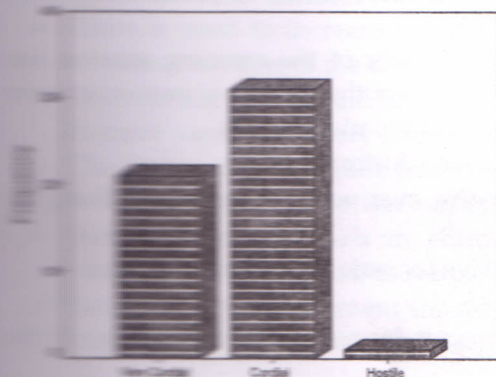


Chart 4

The highest percentage of 58.5 affirmed that they enjoy a cordial relationship with library staff while 39.6% also indicated that the members of staff are very cordial.

Table 4: Rating of library resources

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Adequate	37	69.8	69.8	69.8
Rarely Adequate	6	11.3	11.3	81.1
Very Adequate	3	5.7	5.7	86.8
Not Adequate	4	7.5	7.5	94.3
No Response	3	5.7	5.7	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 revealed that to a greater extent, resources in Gandhi library are adequate for users needs. However, 7.5% of the respondents indicated that resources are not adequate.

On library environment, users gave different opinions but most salient ones that cut across majority of respondents include the followings:

- Library environment is better than what it was some 2years back in terms of cooling system (air conditioning) but could be better.
- The environment is neat, quiet and clean but could be cleaner, especially the shelves.
- Library services are satisfactory especially in the morning sessions but lack of enough staff in the evenings affect the quality of service as most staff on ground then could hardly attend to users' needs.
- The library has a very rich collection on African history
- The members of staff are friendly, ever ready to serve, and highly cooperative with users.
- The library environment is conducive for serious academic research.

In spite of the various positive comments by respondents, some are of the opinion that:

- There are dearth of library materials especially journals. Most journals in this library are old and obsolete, so also some books.
- The lightning condition is poor: and the library is not conducive especially when there is power outage.
- Sometimes even when there is electricity supply, the air conditioners do not function which makes the place very hot and unaccommodating especially during hot season.

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- Lastly, users are denied access to daily newspapers and magazines until after about 72hours (3days).

Similarly, respondents were asked on the way forward to ensure adequate services that would make the library research friendly as the name implies. Again, the following suggestions were given:

- Provision of adequate lightning, comfortable chairs for reading, and creation of more reading space to accommodate a sizeable number of users.
- Library resources should be upgraded. That is, current materials both books and journals should be acquired; and recent postgraduate theses and dissertation should be made available to users.
- The manual catalogue in the section should be updated and made functional to make access to materials easy since the central manual catalogue does not give a link to all materials in Gandhi library especially government publications. Also, there should be OPAC points within Gandhi library and internet facilities accessible to users.
- Awareness should be created on the kind of information resources contained in this library and this could better be done by putting its collections online to allow for international use; at the same time having links with other libraries online.
- There is need to increase the staff strength in order to ensure effective service at anytime of the day.
- The opening hour should be extended to allow users who are also workers to make use of the library after closing from work.
- The library should acquire more foreign books and journals to allow for a wide range of choice between African collections and foreign ones.
- More scholarly journals in educational research should be provided; newspapers and magazines should be available to readers on daily basis.
- Lastly, library management should motivate members of staff so that they can give their best. It may be by sending them on training or otherwise.

Coincidentally, many of the respondents gave similar suggestions on how to improve the library and it is believed that most, if not all the suggestions are genuine.

Implications of the findings and conclusions

From the findings above, is obvious that the library under study is rich in collection with most of the resources adequate for users' needs. This is

commendable. Also, the resources are relevant to users' academic pursuit. What this implies is that more users will be endeared to the library.

The study indicated that the library services are satisfactory; with a better and conducive environment coupled with friendly members of staff. The implication of this is that more users will patronize this library. However, because of the 'close shelf' system adopted by the library users are denied access to relevant materials especially in the evenings when most of the staff would have closed for the day and the only staff on duty will either have too many people to attend to or does not even know where the material is located.

Also there are some lapses in the area of access to daily newspaper and magazines. Users are denied access to daily papers until after about 72 hours when the information contained might have become stale. There is need for upgrading of resources especially academic journals in all disciplines. Lastly, the study has revealed that days and hours of opening are not enough. Users were asking for longer hours of opening Saturday inclusive. The implication of this is that there may be need to extend hours of opening and also include Saturdays in days of operation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is hereby recommended that the library management equips the library with more up-to-date resources especially journals so that users can have enough materials for their various research needs. More hands should be employed to ensure adequate services at all times. In the interim, users should be allowed access to the shelves so as to assist themselves whenever the need arises. Furthermore, newspapers and magazines should be made available to users on daily basis. To achieve this, there may be need to increase the number of newspapers subscribed to so that a set will be dedicated to users. The lightning condition of the library should be addressed and the air conditioners should be made functional at all times. Though the library presently opens between 8am to 10pm Mondays to Fridays, with more staff on ground Saturdays could be included. This will provide users with tight schedules in their places of work opportunities to use the library on Saturdays.

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