

Information Seeking Behavior of Academic Librarians for Effective Performance: A study of UNIBEN, AAU and AUCHI Polytechnics, EDO State, Nigeria.

IGBINOVIA, MAGNUS O. and IKENWE, IGUEHI J. (CLN)

ABSTRACT

Academic librarians play a major role in achieving the objectives of tertiary institutions, which in most cases are centered on learning , teaching and research. The study examined the information seeking behavior of academic librarians in John Harris Library, UNIBEN(Federal) , Ambrose Alli University library(State) and Auchi Polytechnic library , Edo state, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research method was adopted to gather information from the population of the librarians in the libraries. Questionnaire was used to collect data from Forty Eight (48) academic librarians out of which, forty two (42) were retrieved and found useable for the study. Frequency counts and simple percentage was used to analyze the obtained data. The study revealed that the predominant information required by academic librarians was information on the actualization of the library's objectives. Findings also showed that the internet was the major source of obtaining information in this 21st century and this consulted source is very rich as they get what they wanted from it. To this end, the librarians rated the general availability and accessible to information as highly accessible. It was therefore recommended that, academic libraries should provide 24/7 internet facilities in the library accessible to all librarians to enhance effective performance and information service delivery to users. Management should encourage staff training and capacity building to enhance their skills and adequate fund should be provided by government for effective management of the libraries.

KEYWORDS: Information needs, Information seeking behavior, Academic librarians

INTRODUCTION: This is an information era where information has become important to thrive in one's profession like librarianship. Everybody needs information to survive in his profession in this 21st century, the information society. Information is a necessary resource for the development of an academic librarian and reliable information is the chief corner stone for building the expertise and practice of librarian's effective performance.

Academic libraries are libraries of higher learning or tertiary institutions of learning such as Universities, polytechnics, colleges of education e.t.c. They are established to provide materials to support the teaching, learning and research objectives of their parent institutions. The library is the nerve centre of higher institution and academic librarians are information professionals trained in the management of library operations.

The usefulness of qualified librarians are no longer in doubt as they are concerned with every aspect of information circle which involves ; generation ,processing ,storage ,retrieval , dissemination and preservation of information which according to Stonier (1991) ,was an important factor in modern production system as opposed to land ,labor and capital because if one possesses enough information, one could reduce the requirement of land , labor and capital .Therefore, making information an important factor of production that could lead to the development of the nation's economy.

Information plays significant roles in the performance of an information professional in academic libraries .Their conduct when searching for information, their behavioral pattern and manner of gathering and sourcing information for personal use, knowledge acquisition, self development and actualization of the library's objectives is paramount. Academic librarians are charged with the responsibility of meeting the information needs of library user's .However, it is imperative for these librarians to perform their task effectively exhibiting an appropriate behavioral pattern when searching for required information which increases their performances and the satisfaction derived by information users in the library. This enhances the discharge of their duties since there are changing trends in the profession of librarianship.

STATEMENT OF NEED

The present information age is characterized with an upsurge in the world's output of information resulting to the phenomenon of information explosion. The increase output in the world's overall publication is directly related to the advent of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and research. This trend has pose a challenge to the librarian (academic

librarian especially) in ensuring that the needs of her information savvy users are readily meet as most of them quickly opt for other sources of information outside the library.

However, in meeting the information needs of library clientele, the librarian engages in several retrieval strategies, consulting several sources (print and non-print) from the wide myriad of information. The process of making this information available (from negotiating the original question to getting feedback based on the information provided) involves a number of stages and certain obstacles would be encountered. Thus, the altitude or behavioral pattern displayed by the librarian will to a great extent determine if s/he will be able to make available to the clientele such information required to meet perceived need.

It therefore follows that the behavioral pattern exhibited by librarians while seeking information is a sine qua non to effective performance.

The objectives of this research are to:

- I. Determine the predominant information required by academic librarians.
- II. Assess the predominant sources consulted by librarians in academic library when seeking for information.
- III. Examine the adequacy of the consulted sources
- IV. Assess the extent to which academic librarians rate the availability and accessibility to information
- V. Determine the influence of gender and the level of education on the information seeking behavior of academic librarians.

The research questions are:

- i. What is the predominant information required by academic librarians?
- ii. What are the predominant sources consulted by academic librarians?
- iii. How adequate is the information retrieved from the consulted sources?

- iv. How does academic librarian rate the availability and accessibility to information?
- v. Is information seeking behavior influenced by gender and the level of education of academic librarians?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information plays a significant role in our various professional and personal lives and librarians are not exceptions. Librarians need information to work properly and improve their performances. Information is universally accepted as an important resource in the library and as such, an organized system of information is a pre-requisite for effective and efficient performance required by librarians in academic libraries. The awareness, possession and appropriate use of accurate information ensure the librarian's effectiveness. Information makes one to be conscious of some topics necessary to fit best into this society.

Nevertheless, information has been defined from different perspectives. Some scholars see information as raw data that is processed and packaged. Whereas, to some others, its a processed data endowed with meaning and purpose. According to Aina (2004), some people refer to information as News, others as facts and yet to others, it is essentially data. However , Popoola (2006) , defined information from the holistic point of view as facts , ideas, messages , opinions, truth, symbols, signals, images ,databases , sounds and processed data that are capable of improving the knowledge state of a user on a random phenomenon or events.

Much library and information science (LIS) research has focused on the information seeking practices of practitioners within various fields of professional work. Studies have been carried out into the information seeking behavior of librarian, academic ,medical , professionals ,engineers and lawyers,(among others), (Wikipedia,2013). Information seeking behavior which results from the recognition of some need (Wilson, 1981) is defined by Krikelas (1983) as any activity of an individual that is undertaken to identify a message that satisfies a perceived need. In other words, information seeking begins when someone perceives that the current state of

possessed knowledge is less than what is needed to deal with some issues or problems. (Popoola, 2011)

Uhegbu (2007), describes information seeking behavior as the way users conduct themselves when searching for information. Ajiboye and Tella (2007) agrees that information seeking behavior is the way and manner people gather and sought for information for personal use , knowledge updating and development . According to Wilson(1999,2000), information seeking behavior includes , “those activities a person may engage in when identifying their own needs for information, searching for information in anyway and using / transferring that information. While , Kakai, et.al (2004) defined information seeking behavior as an individual’s way and manner of gathering and sourcing for information for personal use , knowledge updating and development.

Information seeking behavior of a user depends on education , access to library and the length of time a user wishes to devote to information seeking, Aina (2004). However, before academic librarians engage in the process of information seeking, there must be an information need he intends to meet and satisfy. Miranda and Tarapanoff (2008) expresses Information needs, as a state or process started when one perceives that there is a gap between the information and knowledge available to solve a problem and the actual solution of the problem.

Wilson (1997) is of the opinion that, for a person or an individual to experience an information need, there must be a motive behind it. on the contrary ,Haruna and Mabawonku (2001), contends that information needs arises when the state of possessed knowledge is less than what is needed to deal with some issues and that information needs are diverse ,constantly changing and not commendable to generalization.

Bello and Musa (2003) in the study of the information needs and seeking behavior of research students’, observed that the importance of knowing the information needs and the way clients go about seeking such information in any library arises from the necessity of libraries .When an

academic librarian discovers a need with an interest, he seeks for information source and this information may be linked to decision making. Most individual seek information from their friends , neighbors' ,colleagues ,group meetings, such as religious groups ,cooperative societies or associations.(Aina,2004).

Information sources include; textbooks, periodicals (journals), reference sources, grey literature, Electronic-resources, among others. Mabawonku (2005) highlights sources in which information can be sought. These include; colleagues, internet, library, friends, family members, recognized institutions, agencies and private organization. Robinson's (2010) research expresses that when seeking information at work, people rely on both other people and information repositories (e.g. document and databases) and spend similar amount of time.

A review of the literature on information seeking behavior shows that information seeking has generally been accepted as dynamic and non-linear (Foster, 2005; Kuhlthau 2006). People experience information search process as an inter play of thoughts, feelings and actions (Kuhlthau, 2006). Information seeking has been found to be linked to a variety of interpersonal communication behavior beyond question asking to include strategies such as candidate answers. (Wikipedia, 2013)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was employed in this research. The population of the study were librarians of academic libraries in University of Benin (UNIBEN; federal University) , Ambrose Alli University(AAU, state University) and Auchi polytechnic library(polytechnic) ,Edo state and a sample size of 48 academic librarians drawn from the three institutions ;UNIBEN, (22),AAU (15),and Auchi Polytechnic library (11) respectively making a total of forty eight (48).

Data for the study was collected using questionnaire, administered to the respondents in their respective libraries with the assistance of professional colleagues who were staff in the

libraries sampled for the study. The first section was, to elicit information on the demographic characteristics of respondents. These include; library, educational qualification, gender and age. The second section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit information on information seeking behavior of academic librarians based on the research questions.

Forty eight (48) copies of Questionnaire were distributed and forty two (42) returned were found useable for the research. Data gathered were analyzed using tables with frequency and percentage.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The results obtained from the analysis of data are as presented below.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

Table 1: Response from academic libraries:

Name of institution	Copies of distributed questionnaire	Copies of usable questionnaire	Percentage (%)
John Harris library	22	22	52.4
Ambrose Alli University	15	11	26.2
Auchi polytechnic library	11	9	21.4
Total	48	42	100

Table 1 Shows that, a total of 48 copies of questionnaire were distributed. 22 copies to John Harris Library (UNIBEN) and 22 returned and found useable, 15 copies were distributed to AAU

library and 11 were found useful. While 11 were distributed to Auchu polytechnic and 9 returned and found useable.

Table 2: Educational Qualification:

Qualification of respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
B.sc	22	52
M.sc	18	43
Ph.D	2	5
Total	42	100

Table 2 shows the demographic information of the respondents on educational qualification. It shows that the predominant respondents in the study were librarians with B.sc (52%). This is, closely followed by librarians with M.sc (43%) and 5% have Doctorate degrees.

Table 3: Respondent by age:

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20 -35	20	47
36 -45	11	26
46 -55	7	17
56 -65	3	8
66 above	1	2
Total	42	100

Table 3 shows the age distribution of the respondents. The figures revealed that respondents within age group 31 -35 years had the highest indicated by 47%, 36 -45 by 26% and 46-55 by 17% respectively. While respondents of age group 66 and above, had the lowest rank indicated by 2%.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

What is the predominant information required by librarians?

Table 3 presents the data on the predominant information required by librarians.

Table 4: Information required by librarians:

Required information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Library management	22	19.5
Trends in librarianship	13	11.5
Professionalism	20	17.5
Actualization of library's objective	26	23
Job prospect	11	9.5
Self development	13	11.5
Pension scheme/retirement life	8	7.1
Total	123	100

The result shows that the predominant information required by academic librarians is information on the actualization of the library’s objective indicated by 23%. This is ranked first among other information required by the librarians. Other predominant information required are; library management (19.5%), professionalism (17.5%), self- development and trends in librarianship (11.5) respectively.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: what are the predominant sources consulted by academic librarians?

Table 5 is a summary of the information sources consulted by academic librarians.

Table 5: Sources of information consulted by librarians:

Sources of information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Textbook	16	22
Reference/journals	14	19
Grey literature	10	14
Internet	25	35
Friends /colleagues	7	19
Total	72	100

Table 2: shows the predominant sources of information consulted by the librarians. The most frequently used sources is the internet indicated by 35% .other frequently used sources are; textbook (22%) and reference/journals indicated by(19%) .The table has also shown that few of the academic librarians get information from friends or colleagues. This is indicated by 7(19%). Many librarians prefer to obtain information from resources that are convenient, easy to use, and reliable.

Research question 3: how adequate is the information retrieved from the consulted sources?

Table 6 : Information retrieval from consulted sources:

Information retrieval	Frequency	Percentage (%)
I get what I want and they are very rich sources of information	19	37.3
I get all the information needed from the consulted sources	16	31.4
I rarely get all information required from consulted sources	12	23.5
I don't get the information I need from the consulted sources	4	17.8
Total	51	100

Table 6 gives a clear analysis of respondents' satisfaction in the use of consulted sources as a medium of information retrieval. 19(37.3%) attest to the fact that they get what they want consulting the sources which are very rich sources of information. This is similar to the second ranking where respondents are of the opinion that they get all they wanted from the consulted sources indicated by 16(31.4). On the contrary, only 4(17.8) of the respondents do not get the information they require from the sources.

RESEARCH QUESTION 4: How does academic librarian rate the availability and accessibility to information?

Table 7: Availability and accessibility to information

Availability and accessibility to information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly accessible	9	21.4
Accessible	32	76.2
Rarely accessible	1	2.4
Not accessible	-	-
Total	42	100

Table 7 shows the respondents’ rating of the availability and accessibility to information by academic librarians. The result shows that 9(21.4%) of the librarians have access to information, 32(76.2%) indicated the information were available and accessible. While 1(2.4%) indicates the information were rarely accessible and non of the respondent attest that the information were accessible. it is very clear from this study that information is generally accessible to academic librarians in Edo state of Nigeria.

Research Question 5: Is information seeking behavior of academic librarian influenced by gender and their level of education?

Table 8: Influence of gender and the level of education on the information seeking behavior of academic librarians:

Gender	Respondents	Percentage	Level of education	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	3	7.1	Yes	30	71.4
No	39	92.9	No	12	28.6
Total	42	100	Total	42	100

The table above reveals that, the information seeking behavior of academic librarians is not influenced by gender. This is shown by 39 (92.9%) as against 3 (7.1%) of the respondents. Also, the table shows that the level of education of academic librarians has influence on their information seeking behavior. This is indicated by 30 (71.4%) against 12(28.6%).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results revealed that the predominant information required by librarians in academic libraries in this study is information on the actualization of the library's objective indicated by 26(23%).

Another important finding of the research is that the internet is the major source of obtaining information by the academic librarians in this study. This is indicated by 25(35%) as against the other sources. This finding is in conformity with Aina (2004) opinion, that with the advent of the internet, many professionals, researchers, and highly placed individuals now seek a large proportion of their information from the internet. In agreement with this, Baro , onyenaia and osaheni (2010) in their research on information seeking behavior of undergraduates in the humanities in three Universities in Nigeria, discovered a heavily reliance (65.6%) of their respondents on the internet as a source of information. This finding is also in corroboration with Akande (2011) in his research on the availability, information retrieval skills and use of Electronic resources by information professionals in academic libraries in south Western Nigeria, who discovered from his investigation, that the internet is heavily used by information professionals.

It was evident from the investigation of this research that the information sources consulted were very rich sources and the academic librarians get what they want from the sources. This is indicated by 19(37.3%). This is in agreement with Ajiboye and Tella (2007), where respondents of their study identified their sources of information to be a very rich sources because they get what they wanted from the sources.

The result revealed that academic librarians attest to high availability and accessibility of information indicated by 9(21.7). Ajiboye and Tella(2007) corroborated this finding when they observed that information is highly accessible. Given this findings, the researchers submit on a general term that academic librarians in this study have high access to information since it is highly available and accessible to them.

The study also indicates that the gender of academic librarians has no influence on their information seeking behavior indicated by 39(92.9%). Contrarily to this finding, Ford, Miller and Moss (2001) found out that females tend to experience more difficulty online.

Also, the findings revealed that the librarian's level of education has influence on their information seeking behavior. This conforms with Awolabi, Jimoh and Okpeh (2010) where their study revealed that, the level of study has influence on student information seeking behavior. Aina (2004) expresses that the information seeking behavior of a user, depends on education, access to library and the length of time a user wishes to devote to information seeking.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings of this study are suggestive of the fact that John Harris library (UNIBEN), Ambrose Alli University library and Auchu polytechnic library all in Edo state of Nigeria has great potentials. It is imperative for these librarians to perform their task effectively and efficiently exhibiting an appropriate behavioral pattern and attitude when searching for required information. This in turn, increases their performance and satisfaction of the information needs derived by users in the library. While inappropriate behavioral pattern exhibited by these librarians could make users opt for information outside the library. The predominant information required by the librarians studied, is information on the actualization of library's objective. Since they exist to meet the information needs of members of their parent institution it becomes a matter of necessity for these academic librarians to equip themselves with the required skills ,attitude and competencies needed to bridge the knowledge gap of library users , only then will their performance be said to be effective and improved.

In light of the findings, the following recommendations were made;

- i. Academic libraries should provide 24/7 internet facilities in the library accessible to all librarians in a bid to enhance performance and information delivery to users.
- ii. The libraries should embark on continue ICT training and self development to enhance their information seeking behavior for effective performance and the management should encourage staff training and capacity building to enhance their skills.
- iii. Enabling ICT/internet connectivity environment enhance by constant power supply should be provided.
- iv. Most of the recommendation above cannot be implemented without fund. Academic libraries should occupy a pride of place in budget and adequate fund should be provided by government for effective running of the libraries.

About Authors:

IGBINOVIA, MAGNUS O.

**Post-graduate student, Department of Library, Archival and information Studies,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan-Nigeria**

Email:infor.migbinovia@yahoo.com. Mobile: 07061643107

AND

IKENWE, IGUEHI J. (CLN)

**Assistant Lecturer, Department of library and information science,
Ambrose Alli University , Ekpoma-Nigeria**

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