

USERS' PERCEPTION OF AND SATISFACTION WITH LIBRARY SERVICES: A CASE STUDY OF KENNETH DIKE LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN

Bolarinwa M. Adeyemi and Olayinka C. Fatoki

Abstract

Academic libraries are facing challenges of competitive pressures, information availability, rising costs and a global digital environment. This situation calls for a better understanding of the specific needs of library users in order to provide the appropriate type and level of service that meets those needs. Assessment of service quality in libraries is one of the most reliable channels to know if clients are satisfied with services offered them. It is therefore imperative to investigate how library users perceive service quality. This paper examines the service quality and users' satisfaction at Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan and also examines how user surveys have been employed in a number of previously published literatures. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data for the study to evaluate the library's performance by measuring the users' satisfaction with (a) library services and resources (b) infrastructure/place/space and (c) suggestions for service improvement. The instrument was distributed randomly to a sample of 800 library users from the university. Suggestions are offered about ways library and information service providers could make more use of the information derived from their own and other organizations' user surveys to improve their services in order to survive.

Keywords: satisfaction, library services, Kenneth Dike library, users', perception

Introduction

The mission of academic libraries is to create a learning environment in which faculty and students are provided with a variety of library resources and ultimately, become competent users. Hence, assessment of service quality through user perspectives is important in library management because it provides a prompt feedback for libraries to assess and improve their services to users. Fowowe (1989) opined that users are seen as the most critical voice in assessing service quality.

Regular evaluation of user needs against existing services and the library resources is a necessary management technique for the continuous upgrading of the services provided by the library of any kind. The management of a library should know whether faculty and students make use of the resources of the library and whether the use of these resources genuinely help students with their assignments and faculty with their teaching and research responsibilities. User needs vary from one library to another as well as from time to time. Therefore, carrying out regular surveys on user needs in various aspects of library usage is an invaluable guide in determining the future directions of library development. University of Ibadan, founded in 1948, is the oldest institution in Nigeria and so the best service and products will be expected of it. The Kenneth Dike library serves thirteen faculties and three research institutes of the university, hence houses collection of books and periodicals pertaining to various fields. Its readership includes undergraduates, postgraduates, academic, supporting staff and the community as a whole.

Are the services and resources offered by Kenneth Dike Library sufficiently adequate to sustain this image? This study is an attempt to investigate the satisfaction level of users with service provision in the broad areas of library collection and usage as well as the facilities available within the library. It will equally attempt to provide the Library management with the results of findings to evaluate the state/quality of the existing services.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the conduct of the research:

1. To examine the degree of usage of the Kenneth Dike Library resources by its clients;
2. To explore the satisfaction levels of library users about the services provided at the Library; and
3. To get feedback from users on how to improve the services and promote user satisfaction at the library

Literature Review

Missions and visions of a university are usually achievable by the support given by its library and this can be measured through the level of satisfied users. Satisfying users' needs in the academic libraries has been the primary objective of libraries and librarians. Simmonds and Andaleeb (2001) argued that providing quality services in academic libraries is now a major issue among academic librarians; they see the library more in terms of the provision of and access to service quality than as just a physical place. Each year new students enter the learning environment with different needs, expectations and information gathering skills. Furthermore, new technologies, databases, and innovative systems for accessing information, have made the library more complicated and challenging for librarians and users alike. Again the inability to easily identify the specific use of a library's services because of the new technologies, and the difficulty to access information sources can all contribute to user dissatisfaction among academic library users.

Assessing service quality is therefore the first step in retaining customers in today's competitive environment. Libraries need to re-examine the range and quality of services they provide. Altman and Herson (1998) stated that "quality service is a competitive necessity for businesses and service organizations. In its core values and Ethics statement, the American Library Association states that "We provide the highest level of service to all library users through appropriate and usefully organized resources, equitable service policies, equitable access and accurate unbiased and courteous response to all requests" (ALA, 2007).

In reassessing what role academic libraries should be playing, the need to improve and deliver better services based on user needs is emerging as an important theme. Millson-Martula and Menon (1995) state that one element of high quality service is "the incorporation of users' personal needs and expectations into the development of programs and services". According to them, the continued success of a service organization such as an academic library depends on the organization's ability to adjust its products and services to correspond to user needs. The concept of user satisfaction in the library literature likewise has evolved to include a broader focus on the users' perspective of the library.

Also, Jayasundara (2008) stated that "the user expectations and satisfaction has been used to determine the service quality which is being seen as critical for service organizations to position themselves strongly in a competitive environment". Similarly, Herson and Calvert (1996) suggest that only customers justify the existence of a library. Nitecki (1996) also claims

that “the assessment of how well a library succeeds depends on the user as a judge of quality. Providing access to information is an equally desirable measure of the quality of academic libraries. Thus, traditional definitions of quality as reflected in the size and diversity of a library’s holdings are being increasingly questioned. Recent research on service quality and users satisfaction in academic libraries such as Coleman (1997), Susan Edwards and M. Browne (1995), Herson and Calvert (1996), Nitecki (1996), and White and Abels (1995) as cited by Andaleeb and Simmonds(1998) based their study on the five-dimensional SERVQUAL model and the twenty-two-item scale proposed by A. Parasuraman , Leonard Berry, and Valarie Zeithaml . This has provided initial guidance in defining library service quality and clarifying the conceptual framework for service delivery improvements. This model has also been challenged by authors such as Nitecki who highlighted several problems with the SERVQUAL measures.

Herson and Calvert (1996) argued that “it is not possible to develop a generic instrument applicable to all libraries in all circumstances, and so the authors introduced an alternate framework, with its attendant measures, that attempts to explain overall library user satisfaction. Although the authors believe that overall satisfaction can be influenced by several of the SERVQUAL dimensions, other factors also were deemed pertinent to their framework. Andaleeb and Simmonds (1998) in their study proposed and tested a five-factor model to explain user satisfaction with academic libraries. These are: *quality of resources*; the availability of resources can have a significant influence on user satisfaction. It is important to note, however, that the *quality* of the resources may be judged from an overall perception as to whether the library can provide access to materials (e.g. through interlibrary loans or other document delivery services) when and where needed. *Responsiveness* is another factor; at academic libraries, users expect that the library staff will attend to their needs quickly and efficiently therefore, promptness, can be critical to users’ perceptions of responsiveness. *Competent services* focused on the library staff being good at explaining how materials are arranged, their knowledge, their ability to answer questions appropriately, and their ensuring that all questions are answered. When users perceive that the library staffs are competent, they will feel assured that problems will be easily resolved, leading to greater satisfaction with the services. Staff demeanor is another factor that can satisfy users; the general demeanor of library staff, as perceived by library users, also can have a significant impact on user satisfaction. Users look for staffs that are friendly and approachable. The last component of service quality is the *physical appearance* of the library environment, the library’s environment can also affect students’ perceptions of the manner in which they believe they can use the library, and therefore modification of the environment, in some cases, should lead to an increased usage of library resources by students (Watson, 2001).

Mundt (2003) conducted a research on user satisfaction in order to determine the quality of service in selected libraries. The survey carried out indicates that comparative data are a suitable means of identifying cases of “best practice” in service institutions. Customer satisfaction is regarded as customers can get more benefits than their cost (Liu & Yen, 2010). Customer satisfaction plays the most important role in total quality management. Many researchers consider customer satisfaction to be the best indicator of a company’s future profit. Martensen and Gronholdt (2003) reviewed literatures and surveyed focus groups indicating that key determinant for library service quality were: electronic resources, collections of printed publications, other library services, technical facilities, library environment and human side of user service. Majid et al. (2001) applied a questionnaire survey to investigate all possible factors that had great impact on library performances. The results showed that collections,

equipment and physical facilities were viewed as most important issues. Libraries need to re-orient their collections, services and facilities to keep pace with these advancements. User feedback is considered as a more reliable factor in measuring the utility and effectiveness of any library. This is the reason that library user surveys have become widespread in academic libraries during the past twenty years. Surveys have often been used as a tool to assess service quality and user satisfaction.

User Surveys

Measuring customer satisfaction is not new in a library environment. Brophy (2006) cites a number of methodologies that can be used for this purpose: user surveys and questionnaires; the LibQual+™ benchmarking instrument; customer feedback analysis; and focus group interviews and Customer Value Discovery. This study is adopting survey method to evaluate the satisfaction level of Kenneth Dike Library users. Library user surveys have become widespread in academic libraries during the past two decades. Surveys have often been used as a method to assess service quality and user satisfaction. Literature on user surveys reports, studies and reviews from library professionals and educators such as Hernon and McClure (1990); Van House, Well and McClure (1990); Hernon and Altman (1998, 2000) and Hernon and Whitman (2001) among many others.

Research Method

To determine user expectations and satisfaction of the University of Ibadan Library System, a user survey was conducted in the library. The study used a structured questionnaire to collect data. Eight hundred (800) copies of the questionnaire were randomly distributed to users that visited the library during the survey exercise in the library while 679 were returned. This exercise took place at the middle of 2011 academic year.

The questionnaire was in four parts. The first part of the questionnaire contained the background information such as status, gender and faculty of the respondents. Part two was used to elicit information on respondents' perception of the library as a place. While part three elicited information on respondents' satisfaction level with library resources and services. The last part requested for respondents' suggestions for improved services. The data was analyzed using simple percentages and frequency counts.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Out of 679 respondents, 371 (54.60%) were male and 308 (45.4%) were female. Figure 1 shows the breakdown of responses by specific user groups with the majority being undergraduates. Figure 2 show the completion numbers across the academic faculty. Respondents were gathered from across the university academic spectrum.

Figure 1 Respondents to survey

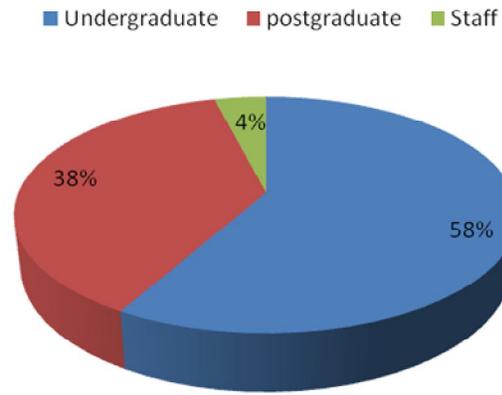
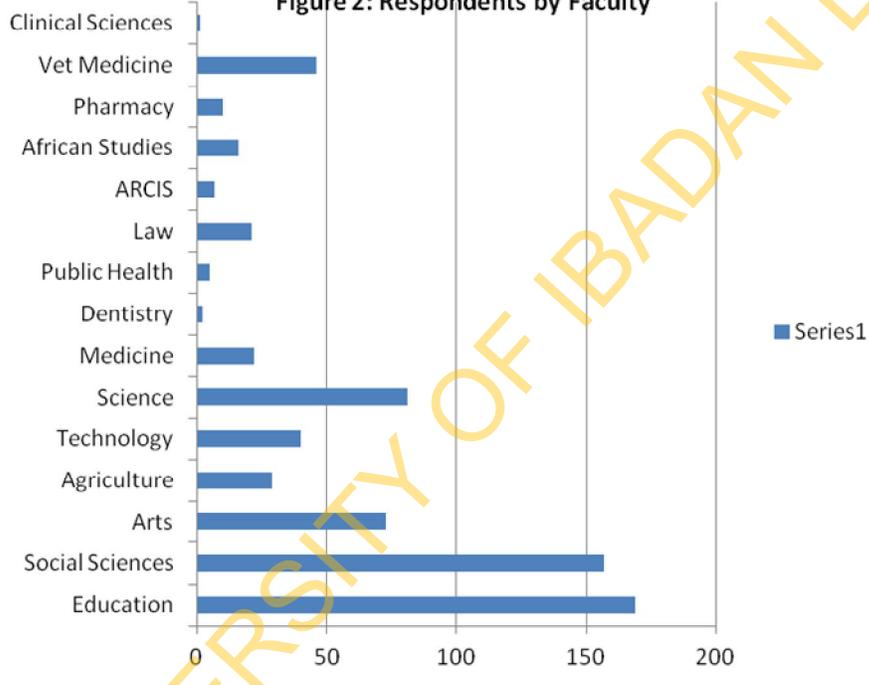
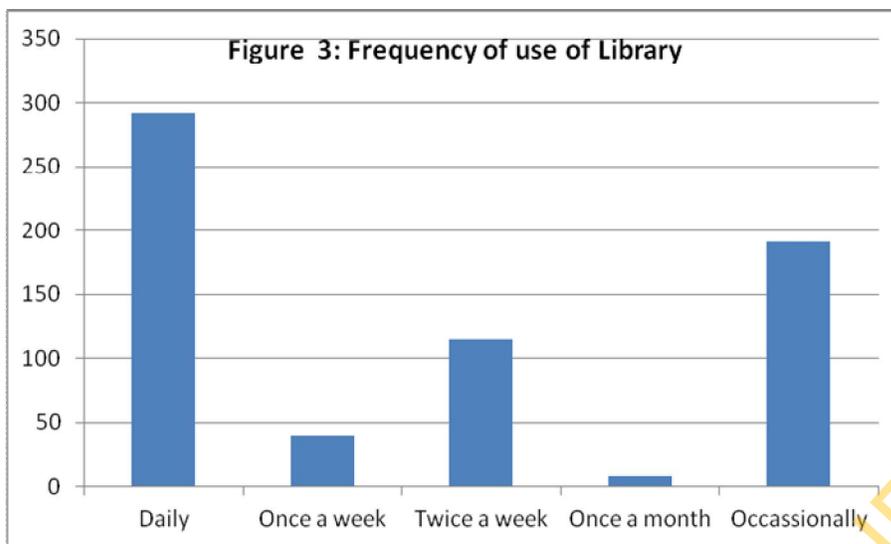


Figure 2: Respondents by Faculty



The overall frequency of use of the library is presented in Figure 3.



Satisfaction with library reading spaces for individual/group study and research

Decision	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Satisfactory	409	60
Not satisfactory	230	33.9
Undecided	40	5.9

Table 1: Respondents satisfaction with reading spaces

Decision	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Important	620	91.3
Not important	41	6.1
Undecided	18	2.6

Table 2: Improvement of Library reading spaces

Library books and journals (print): Substantial number of the respondents (48.7%), were satisfied with library books and journals (print), 50.6% were unsatisfied while 0.59% were undecided. Overall 95.4% of the respondents considered it important for the library to improve its services by providing more books and journals in print. 3.5% did not consider it important while 1.02% was undecided.

Library electronic resources (e-journals, e-books, databases, online public access catalogue): The data analyzed revealed that 511 (75.25%) of the respondents were unsatisfied with the library services in the area of electronic resources and 95.58% expressed that it is important for the library improve its service in this area.

Access to Internet and Computers in the library: 369 (75.9%) respondents considered the library's provision of access to computers and the internet as unsatisfactory and 95.58% thought it very important for the library to improve its service along this line

Respondents Satisfaction with Internet & Computers			Respondents Suggestions for Improvement		
	Frequency	Percentage (%)		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Satisfactory	153	22.5%	Important	649	95.58
Not Satisfactory	369	75.9	Not Important	19	2.79
Undecided	10	1.47	Undecided	10	1.47

Table 3: Breakdown of respondents satisfaction with computer and internet

Library support for learning and research support: A good percentage (64.06%) of the respondents was satisfied with the library services in the support of learning and research in the university whereas 154 respondents (33.6%) were not satisfied. However, 93.8% of the respondents expressed that it was important for the library to improve its support for learning and research activities of the user community.

Library staff support: The library staff support received was mainly satisfactory to 427 (62.89%) respondents though 36.2% were not satisfied. However, 91.78% of the respondents think it very important for the library staff to be more friendly and helpful in providing library services to its clients.

The respondents majorly considered the library as a place to learn and study and believe that the library makes needed information easily available. The survey revealed that respondents did not quite agree that the library stock was up-to-date. They also did not agree that the library is a place to meet and socialize with their friends. While many (424) of the respondents perceive the library as a comfortable and inviting location, 89 were undecided and only 24% disagreed. With regards to the sense of safety and security of library users, a large proportion of the respondents (64.8%) considered the library a safe and secure space whereas 16% are undecided about the issue. Most of the respondents (93.5%) expressed the importance of improving security in the library.

The library opening hours was mostly (73.6%) regarded as satisfactory and interestingly 74.5% also expressed the importance of the library to improve library services by extending the library opening hours.

The library photocopying and bindery services were also assessed as averagely satisfactory and improvement on these services in the library was very important to the users.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study which measured both the user expectations and satisfaction of KDL services gave a better picture of how well the library stands as a service organization. User satisfaction reflects that the users of the University of Ibadan library are generally satisfied with its service. The most important area expected by users was to have access to Electronic resources, internet and computer in the library followed by up- to- date stock/prints resources. The highest performance area was the availability of needed information followed by feel safe and secure in the library. The study found that on the average, the library users are satisfied with the services such as space, information resources of the library as a whole. Respondents are relatively most satisfied with the library as a place and the space, followed by library support for learning and research. There is a perceived gap between user expectation and performances on access to electronic resources as indicated by the high level of dissatisfaction of respondents with library's electronic resources service. Nevertheless almost all the respondents considered it important for the Kenneth Dike library to improve on the services offered to them. There is an urgent need for the library to improve its services, infrastructure and collections so as to serve users' learning and research needs.

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made to help promote user satisfaction:

- The management of the library should intensify effort in enhancing the internet access
- Library staff should embrace high quality service and work together to achieve the library's overall goals
- Information literacy should be a part of library orientation and library use programme and it should run throughout the session
- The library should update the collections to ensure relevance and up-to-dateness. Weeding out-dated materials would be very helpful..

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Mrs. Bolarinwa M. Adeyemi is a Principal Librarian in charge of Readers' Services at the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She holds an MLS degree in Library and Information Studies from the University of Ibadan. She can be reached at bolaadeyemi@gmail.com . *Olayinka C. Fatoki* is a Principal Librarian in Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan. She holds an MLS degree in Library and Information Studies from the University of Ibadan. She can be reached at kaefatoki@yahoo.com

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