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Use of library resources and services in Nigerian agricultural research institutes: The case of two research libraries in Ibadan, Oyo State

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Abstract

This study was carried out to assess the extent to which agricultural researchers make use of the research – based collections and services in agricultural research libraries in Ibadan, Oyo State. It adopted the descriptive survey research design. Two hundred library users from two agricultural research institutes in Ibadan were selected as participants using simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire was used as an instrument to collect data which were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequencies counts and percentages. Results showed that the library resources and services were not very adequate to attract high level of patronage by the   agricultural researchers. Study also revealed that access to the available resources was impaired by a number of factors. Recommendations are therefore made to further promote the use of library resources and services. Most importantly, it was recommended that current research–based collection, both in print and electronic formats, should be developed in a digital environment.

Key words: *Library resources, library services, agricultural research institutes, Ibadan, Nigeria*

Introduction

Libraries in institutions have not only been widely regarded as information support units but also as the nucleus for all research activities. Agricultural research institutes are specialized institutions which enhance agricultural production and sustainable development. They, however, cannot fulfill their research mandate without heavily depending on information support services provided by the libraries. In a country like Nigeria where the economy is agriculture- based, the need for up-to-date agricultural information as a precursor to agricultural research cannot be played down. As noted by Ekpenyong (2001), information and research in agriculture cannot be separated from each other, as they are dependent on one another. According to her, availability of information will not only open up new channels for research but will also help prevent duplication. Lack of information will affect agricultural research negatively and therefore, for efficient, effective and relevant research, access to information is paramount.

The role of institutional libraries is aptly captured in the words of Ezeala and Yusuf (2011) which states:

> as a very important unit of the agricultural research institute, the institute's library is established at the inception of the organization. The need is to house the collection of information relevant to the institute's research in various forms and effectively manage the increased information generated.

Research has shown that libraries function well with improved service

delivery when they get responses and feedback from their patrons on services provided to them. Such knowledge will, among other things, help to put in place strategies that can positively affect the quality assurance measures of the library system. One of the proven age-long approaches adopted for generation of such knowledge is the conduct of user studies to determine the use of library resources, services, and the information needs of the library users. An example of such studies is Magid, Eisenschitz and Anwar (1999) which reported that, an understanding of the information needs as well as the ways scientists use their libraries is crucial for efficiently meeting their information needs. Similarly, Zhang (1992) noted that adequate knowledge of the information needs of scientists and the ways they use their libraries is imperative for effectively supporting their research activity. Perera (1995) accordingly remarked that such an understanding is expected to help develop library collections and services that are more likely to satisfy user information needs.

In spite of the fact that libraries have been universally acknowledged as playing a supportive role in achieving institutional goals, several studies have indicated that agricultural research libraries in Nigeria lack adequate resources and services that can attract maximum patronage by the researchers. For example, Aina (1989), Aina and Adedigba (1995), Igbeka (2001), Ezeala (2009), Ezeala and Nwalo (2011), and Ezeala and Yusuf (2011), have all reported that the library as the information sector has not contributed enough to the provision of information to agricultural information user population. Little wonder that Ezeala and Nwalo (2011) revealed that very few researchers patronize the agricultural research libraries. To improve the usage of the libraries, they suggested the need for the research libraries to embark on periodic performance evaluation so as to determine how well they are meeting the objective for which they were established.

It is against this background that this study is conducted to determine the extent to which the resources and services of agricultural research libraries are meeting the information needs of the researchers. In other words, the study is an attempt to investigate the use of library resources and services in agricultural research libraries in Nigeria with a specific focus on two research libraries in Ibadan, Oyo State of Nigeria.

Literature review

Evaluation of the performance of library by measuring the effectiveness of its resources and services by user approach is the best way to determine the extent to which the users of the library are satisfied with its resources and services. A major mandate of the agricultural research institutes' libraries is the acquisition, organization and dissemination of relevant agricultural information to meet the information needs of the researchers. To this end, having a working knowledge of the types of information to be provided is an important prerequisite for the research libraries. An essential plan and programme to attain this noble objective culminate in periodic survey of the users' use and satisfaction about the library resources and services. According to Lancaster (1978) quoted in Ezeala and Nwalo (2011), an evaluation of effectiveness is an evaluation of user satisfaction. Rellalier (2005) has noted that libraries can adopt user approach or user satisfaction to evaluate its level of performance.

In establishing any library, the purpose of collection development and services must be clearly stated. Therefore, to justify the existence of the library, and determine whether it is fulfilling the purpose for which it is established, the collection and services must be evaluated from time to time. The American Library

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Association (ALA) (2003) guidelines for collection development capture it in the following words:

> Evaluation is made to determine whether the collection is meeting its objectives, how well it is serving its users, in which ways or area it is deficient, and what remains to be done to develop the collections.

Graham (2003) also lends credence to the fact that good evaluations are designed to ensure that the most reliable picture is obtained of a programme. According to him, the generic goal of most evaluation is to influence decision-making or policy formulation through the provision of empirically driven feedbacks. In the same vein, Keenen and Johnson (2000) asserted that evaluation is carried out by measuring the performance of a system or services and assessing its effectiveness in meeting established objectives. Adegbule –Adesida (1994) also opined that, in order to give optimal service to researchers in agriculture, libraries need to know how they use information in their work.

Although several user studies like Adegbule –Adesida (1994), Igbeka (2001), Ezeala (2009), Ezeala and Yusuf (2011) have been conducted on the use of library by agricultural scientists and researchers in Nigeria, there is still scanty reported facts in the literature about the use of library resources and services of the agricultural research libraries in Ibadan, Oyo State. The study of Ogunjobi and Fagbami (2012) which coveredthe four (4) Agricultural research institutes in Ibadan, Oyo State, was focused on the use of Internet by the agricultural scientists.

In view of the foregoing, the current study set out to investigate how the agricultural scientists and researchers in research institutes in Ibadan with particular reference to Nigerian Institute of Horticulture (NIHORT) and Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN) make use of the library resources andservices.It is hoped that the findings will inform the development of collections and design of information systems, programmes and services that will meet the information needs of the researchers.

Objectives of the study

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Find out information resources available in the research libraries studied;
2. Determine the extent to which the library users make use of the resources;
3. Find out the library services provided for the users of the libraries;
4. Investigate how accessible the library resources are to the users;
5. Find out the factors impeding the use of the research libraries;
6. Proffer ways of improving the usage of the research libraries.

Research questions

To achieve the foregoing objectives, the following six research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. What are the information resources available in the studied research libraries?
2. What is the extent of use of the resources by the library users?
3. What are the services rendered to the users in the libraries?
4. What is the level of accessibility of the library resources to the library users?
5. What are the factors militating against the use of the agricultural research libraries?
6. What are the ways of improving the usage of the research libraries?

Methods

This study employed survey research design. The study population consisted of 225 library users of NIHORT and 175 users of FRIN in the year 2010. Thus, 400 research library users constituted the study population in the two agricultural research libraries studied.

To generate the sample for the study, simple random sampling technique was used to select 200 library users out of the population of 400 using the table of random numbers. A structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was used to gather data for the study. The questionnaire was divided into four main sections. Section A deals with demographic information of the respondents such as: sex, age, status (student, researcher and lecturer), years of using the library. Section B deals with the use of library resources and information services. Section C elicits information on access to library resources while section D was designed to gather information on the problems encountered by the library users when using the library resources and services.

The administration of the questionnaire was handled by a trained research assistant who visited the two research libraries to distribute 200 copies of the questionnaire with permission from the head librarians of the research libraries. The research assistant distributed the copies of the questionnaire randomly to the regular users of the library as they were entering into the research libraries to make use of the resources.

In order to obtain adequate response from the respondents, some precautions were taken in the process of administration of the questionnaire. For example, care was taken to ensure that a respondent was not allowed to fill more than a copy of the questionnaire. Further, the respondents were entreated to fill the questionnaire before they left the library. Also, attention was given to respondents in areas where they needed clarifications.

With all the precautionary measures taken, all the 200 copies of the questionnaire distributed were returned and found analyzable. Thus, the return rate of the administered questionnaire was 100%. The data collection lasted for two weeks.

Data gathered was analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and simple percentages.

Findings

The data obtained were analyzed and the results are presented in tables as shown as follows:

Table 1: Sex of the respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage%
Males	124	62.0
Females	76	38.0
Total	200	100

Table 1 reveals that 124 (62.0%) of the respondents were males while 76(38.0%) were females. The result showed that more males participated in the study than females.

Table 2 indicates the status of the library users that participated in the study from the two research libraries studied. Table 2 shows that the predominant respondents in the study were students and they constituted 95(47.5%) of the respondents; 55(27.5%) were researchers while 50(25.0%) were lecturers.

Table 2: Status of respondents

Status	Frequency	Percentage%
Researchers	55	27.5
Lecturers	50	25.0
Students	95	47.5
Total	200	100

In order to determine the information resources available in the libraries that were studied, the researchers, the lecturers and the students using the libraries were presented with a list of library resources from which they were requested to tick those resources available in their libraries. The result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Users' opinions on library resources readily available in the research libraries

Library Resources	Frequency	Percentage %
Journals	10	5
Reference materials	25	12.5
Computers	10	5
Textbooks	60	30
A-V materials	20	10
CD- ROMs	10	5
Magazines	10	5
Electronic resources	35	17.5
Internet	20	10
Total	200	100

As shown in Table 3, textbooks were the most available library resources to which 60(30%) of the respondents subscribed. A total of 35 (17.5%) of the respondents attested to availability of electronic resources while 25(12.5%) indicated that reference materials were available. Looking generally at Table 3, one can conclude that the library resources were not readily available in the libraries. For example, Journals, and internet resources, which are universally accepted as sources of current research information were not readily available in the libraries as indicated by 10(5%) of respondents subscribing to journals and 20(10%) to internet resources.

To ascertain the extent of use of the available resources in the libraries, it was necessary for the library users to indicate their frequency of use of the resources through a response format drawn as: everyday, once in a week, several times in a week, etc. Table 4 reveals the responses of the respondents.

Table 4: Frequency of use of library resources

Frequency	Respondents	Percentage (%)
Everyday	55	27.5
Once in a week	45	22.5
Several times in a week	40	20.0
Once in a month	30	15.0
Whenever necessary	30	15.0
Total	200	100

It is glaring from Table 4 that majority of the respondents were not regular library

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users. Looking at Table 4, 55(27.5%) used the resources in the library on a daily basis, while 45(22.50%) used them once in a week. The pattern of library use revealed in this table shows that the library has little to contribute to the research activities of the researchers as regards provision of relevant, current information. It is very likely that the researchers source for their needed information outside the research libraries. This is not surprising as Internet and Journals which are mostly useful to the researchers are not readily available in the research libraries as shown in Table 3.

One of the factors that can determine the level of use of the resources is accessibility to the stock of the library. To ascertain this, the respondents were given options of Yes or No as to whether they have access to the materials or not. The result is as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Access to research library resources

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	83	41.50
No	117	58.5
Total	200	100

To gain access to the information contained in the resources, there must be physical access to the materials. Table 5 has clearly shown that 83(41.5%) of the respondents could gain access to the research materials as against 117(58.5%) who could not gain access to the materials.

To seek users' opinions on the services provided by the libraries, a list of likely services to be provided by a research library was generated and the users were requested to select out of the list the library services provided for them by their libraries. The result is as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Services frequently provided in the research libraries

Service	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reference services	25	12.5
Library use hour	15	7.5
Photocopy	40	20.0
User education	10	5.0
CD-ROM search	10	5.0
Inter-library Loan	10	5.0
Assistance to readers	15	7.5
Internet services	10	5.0
Circulation services	65	32.5
Total	200	100

Table 6 reveals the services frequently rendered to the users in the research libraries. According to Table 6, circulation service is mostly provided as indicated by 65(32.5%) of the library users; 25(12.5%) of the respondents indicated the provision of reference services while 40(20.0%) agreed that photocopy service is one of the frequently provided library services.

Table 7 offers some factors impeding access to the research materials and which indirectly militate against their use.

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Table 7: Factors Preventing Access and Use of Materials

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reading materials not always available	85	42.5
Materials not current	32	16.0
Lack of organization of materials	25	12.5
Lack of internet resources	16	*8.0*
Poor power supply	14	7.0
Inadequate seating space	10	5.0
Poor attitude of library staff	10	5.0
Library environment not conducive to reading	8	4.0
Total	200	100

From Table 7, 85(42.5%) of the respondents indicated that reading materials were not always available, while 32(16.0%) indicated that materials were not current. Lack of organization could hinder access and use of materials as subscribed to by 25(12.5%) of the researchers. The results in Table 7 imply that the library is not meeting the information needs of the researchers as regards provision of text materials. Lack of access to and use of the materials can hinder the conduct of research and agricultural productivity. It is an unfortunate situation in the agricultural research libraries.

The need to improve on the quality and quantity of resources stocked in the libraries and services rendered to the users cannot be over-emphasized. In line with this, information was elicited from the respondents in the form of suggestions on what should be done to improve the usage of the research libraries. The various suggestions provided were collated, collapsed, analyzed and presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Improvements for the Usage of Libraries

Suggestions	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Provision of current information resources (internet, Journals and Textbooks)	100	50.0
Organization of reading materials	30	15.0
Employment of competent staff	35	17.5
Provision of more seats	25	12.5
Provision of stand- by generator	10	5.0
Total	200	100

Looking at Table 8, it is glaring that majority of the researchers would like the library to make provision for availability of Internet sources, current Journals and textbooks in abundance as shown by 100 (50.0%) of the respondents. 35(17.5%) responded to employment of competent staff while 30 (15.0%) clamored for organization of the reading materials in the research libraries. All these suggestions were given as panacea for improving the usage of the libraries.

Discussion

The agricultural scientists use a variety of information sources while seeking information with each source contributing to their information requirement at varied degrees (Sing, 2012). This fact has justified the reason why the library has been described as the first port of call for researchers in any institution. The researchers

get to know what others have done in their fields by studying past studies conducted. By doing this, they avoid duplication of research efforts. Also, they get enough information through the information sources stocked in the libraries to assist them in their current studies. This study found that textbooks, electronic resources, references materials and the Internet were available for the use of the researchers in the libraries. The study has shown that the most available resource in the libraries as indicated by only 60(30.0%) of the respondents was textbooks. It can be implied from this finding that the research libraries are not adequate in terms of their collection development. This finding is in support of Ezeala (2011) and Igbeka (2001) findings that agricultural research libraries and university libraries in Nigeria lack adequate resources for the researchers in agriculture.

Another important finding from the study was that the research libraries were not heavily used by the agricultural researchers. A possible explanation for the observed library use culture might be that internet which is a major library resource heavily used by researchers in agricultural resource institutes in Ibadan, as reported in Ogunjobi and Fagbami (2010) was not readily available in the two research libraries studied.

The present study also found that other major constraints/factors apart from internet, preventing the use of the library resources were: reading materials not always available, lack of up-to date information resources, lack of organization of materials. The implication is that the researchers would not be satisfied with the collections available in the libraries. This finding is in agreement with the finding of the study of Veeranjaneyulu and Ramesh (1999) conducted on agricultural scientists of Andhra Pradesh which reported that 83% of the agricultural scientists are not happy with the collection of books and periodicals available in the agricultural libraries.

However, the study found that circulation services/lending services, photocopy services, and reference services were the services considered to be frequently provided and used in the agricultural research libraries. This pattern of use of library services as revealed in this study in decreasing order is similar to the finding of Kumar et al (2010) where, lending service, reprographic service (photocopy), reference service and Inter-library loan are used by the respondents in decreasing order as shown.

A major and crucial finding of the study on how to improve the usage of the libraries as suggested by the respondents is the provision of up –to- date information like Internet sources, current Journals and books. This suggestion is in line with Ogunjobi and Fagbami (2010) recommendation that Internet networks must be active and continuously sustained in order to make this valued resource effective in all agricultural research institutes.

Conclusion

The study revealed that agricultural researchers know the key role library could play in their research activities. To this end they consult the resources and employ the services of the research libraries.

However, the study revealed that the resources are inadequate to meet the information needs of the researchers. Library in any research institute is the hub and nucleus of research activities in the institute. For agricultural research institute libraries to play their key role as an agent of supply and provision of needed information, the collection must be research-based and well developed.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made

to improve the development of the agricultural research libraries.

1. The library should justify its existence by providing access to research-based collections.
2. The research libraries should improve on their service delivery by providing customized services like current awareness services, indexing and abstracting, selective dissemination of information.
3. Adequate fund should be made available to provide enabling environment for research in the libraries
4. With a strong determination to facilitate access to electronic information using the Internet and electronic databases, there should be library use instruction to impart Information Search Skills on users.
5. There should be an aggressive campaign and Public Relations Programme to sensitize the researchers on library operations and systems.

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