

USE AND MISUSE OF REFERENCE SOURCES BY AHMADU BELLO
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS IN KASHIM IBRAHIM LIBRARY

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Abstract

The questionnaire technique was used to study the level of use and misuse of reference services in Kashim Ibrahim Library. (180) One hundred and eighty questionnaire were randomly administered to users of Reference Division of the library, 150(83%) were duly completed and returned to the researcher. The analysis shows that 10(6.7%) respondents had a good knowledge of the use of Reference materials. 90(60%) respondents had a fair know/edge of the use of reference materials, while 50 (33.3%) respondents had Average knowledge on how to use reference materials. The research reveals some problems like students and staff inability to use the reference materials effectively; some of them lack patient, lack of lime and above all, the knowledge and ability to understand the method and techniques used in search strategy in Reference environment were identified. Recommendations have been made based on these results.

Introduction :

References services provide assistance to library users in understanding what information is available both inside and outside the library. Librarians and staff at the reference desk of the library are available to answer questions, assist readers with research, and help to explain the use of both printed and electronic resources materials.

The library generally is recognized as the heart of educational institutions especially the university. Arua (1998) defines the library as essentially educational service, which helps to facilitate the implementation of educational planning and objectives. The library has books and non-books materials which are for effective use for information dissemination and research purpose. It has now become fashionable that library users are desirous of retrieving information materials within the shortest period of time.

Library users can consult the staff at the reference desk for help in finding information,

using a structured reference interview, the librarian works with the library users to clarify their needs and determine what information sources will fill them. The reference librarian diagnoses and treats information quests. Edem and Lawal (1996) posit that one of the ways of stimulating the effective use of books and other materials stored in a university library is by teaching the library user especially undergraduate and graduate students how to obtain information from available sources. This method of teaching is through user education or library skill course which should be compulsory to all first year students of the university.

Reference work on the other hand according to Kayoma and Isah (2003) is the most traditional and basic information services at least in universities. For the purpose of this survey, reference service was taken to include manual literature searching, quick reference and provision of factual information and individual guidance to readers in answering

and searching for facts themselves. The attitude of the reference librarians is crucial to the image of the library. Aboyade (1983) reiterates that the reference section of the library is crucial in a library set up, it is the first point of contact between the library and its users. Users will judge the service they receive not only on whether or not they get what they come for, but also on the attitude and manners of the reference librarian. It is believed that the reference librarian's attitude encourages the users to seek for assistance. The success of reference service depends on the professional knowledge of the reference librarian. No matter how large the library collection is, if not properly organized, it might as well be regarded as mere window dressing. The reference librarian should be able to provide users search techniques to the information they need.

Purpose of the Study

The focus of this paper is to assess the use and misuse of reference information sources by Ahmadu Bello University students in Kashim Ibrahim Library and to investigate measures put in place by reference librarian and his assistant in educating users on how to use reference materials in order to reduce the misuse of reference information sources.

Statement of the Problem

Reference service by its nature is the core of research activities in a university library. The need for this study was out of personal observation, experience and realization of students' attitude and information seeking behaviour in reference environment. Students or library users hardly seek for reference staff assistance when they are looking for information. It is either because of their ignorance of the existing information resources or they are shy of asking questions from staff at reference desk of the library. Edoke (2000) points out that reference and information work are important component of all library services. For this reason, librarians

should be curious about the information seeking behaviour and attitude of library users.

Ibrahim (2001) stated that it is a known fact that most of the students using reference sections of the Nigerian universities libraries go there to read their personal books and consult already known reference materials. Alafiatayo (1977) notes that most of the library users are shy to approach the reference staff for assistance in answering their inquiries. Therefore, very few of them really go to the reference desks to ask questions or to make use of other reference and information services provided at the desk. Attempt to provide answers to the above questions and observations will no doubt reveal those factors that are responsible for the use and misuse of reference sources of information.

Literature Review

Reference and information services comprise of three basic elements: information source, information seeker, and the librarian. The purpose of reference and information service is to allow easy information provision and accessibility. The reference librarian occupies a central position, in this respect. Whittaker (1977) observes that without the reference librarian bringing source and seeker together, the flow would either never take place at all, or would only take place inefficiently. Goetsch (1995) observes that the reference desk represents the critical mass of resources - human, printed, and electronic interactions, so configured for convenient and predictable locations so that the library patrons can find the service and someone to help them secure and access the required information. Reference service according to Edoke (2000) is the personal assistance given by librarians to individuals in search of information for whatever purpose as well as various library activities deliberately designed to facilitate easy availability of information. There are a lot of other definitions and views expressed on

reference service but they all imply the same idea. Basically, the library performs no other function besides providing information in a useful format to its users. User education as defined by Mews (2000) is the "instruction given to readers to help them make the best use of a library". The two type of user education in most of the Nigerian university libraries include library orientation and bibliographic instructions. The library orientation normally takes place within the first week of freshmen arrival. The programme introduces students to usage and services in the library while bibliographic instruction introduces the students to the use of various reference and retrieval mechanism in the library.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

1. What types of reference and information inquiries do student make at the reference desks?
2. What is the level of student knowledge about reference information sources?
3. What are the problems encountered in the use of reference information sources?

4. What type of misuse of reference information sources by student's sources are observed?

Methodology

In view of the fact that this study is intended to find out the level of use and misuse of reference sources by Ahmadu Bello University student in Kashim Ibrahim Library, the study adopted the descriptive research method and the instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire. The questions asked were meant to elicit information about student use and misuse of reference information sources, their awareness of indexes to both general and subject encyclopedia and the patterns of use and misuse of library catalogue. A total of 180 questionnaires were administered to users of reference section of the library, 150 (83%) were duly completed and returned to the researcher.

Descriptive statistic such as frequency and percentage tabulations were used for analysis.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

The result of the survey shows the following:

Table 1: Student Participation in Library Orientation

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Participation	50	33.3
Non participation	80	53.3
Not aware of orientation	20	13.4
Total	150	100

Table 1 above indicates that 80(53.3%) have not been participating in library orientation organized in the library for fresh student in the university while 50(33.3%) indicates that

they participated in the library orientation organized by the library. However, 20 (13.4%) are not aware of any library orientation for fresh student.

Table 2: Types of reference and information inquiries student make at reference desks

Types of reference enquiries	Frequency	Percentage
Ready reference	40	26.6
Directional information	60	40
Specific information	30	30
Research information	20	13.4
Total	150	100

The Table above shows that 60 (40%) respondents stated that most of their presence in reference section is for directional information, while 40(26.6%) stated that they are always in reference for

ready reference service, 30(20%) and 20(13.4%) of the respondents stated that, they come to reference section for specific and research information respectively.

Table 3: Level of Student's Knowledge of Reference Information Sources

Knowledge of reference information sources	Frequency	Percentage
Very knowledgeable	10	6.7
Good knowledge	50	33.3
Fair knowledge	90	60
Total	150	100

Table 3 above shows that 90(60%) respondents have fair knowledge of reference information sources because most of them did not participate in library orientation. 50(33.3%) indicated that they have good knowledge about reference information sources, while 10(6.7%) are

very knowledgeable of reference information source. With 90% respondents having fair knowledge of reference information sources is a major factor responsible for the misuse of reference information sources.

Table 4: Problems Encountered in the Use of Reference Information Sources

Problems encountered in the use of reference materials	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of knowledge in the use of reference materials	60	40
Lack of techniques in the use of reference materials	40	26.6
Lack of patience to search	30	20
Lack of time to do the search	20	13.4
Total	150	100

Table 4 above has shown that 60(40%) agreed that lack of knowledge on how to use the reference materials is the major problem they encountered in reference environment. 40(26.6%) lack the technical know-how of the approach they will use in using the reference information sources. While 20(13.4%) stated that they lack patience to do the search and time is always against them. Most students

come to the library some few minutes to their lecture; there is no sufficient time to do their search. The researcher has confirmed from the previous works in the literature review that without library catalogue, one cannot retrieve materials with ease from the library.

However, for library to achieve the stated feat above there is need for library orientation and competent reference librarian that will be

knowledgeable, understanding and skill in library techniques the needs of his patron.

Table 5: Types of Misuse of References Information Sources

Misuse of reference materials	Frequency	Percentage
Mutilation of materials	50	33.3
Mishelving by staff	45	30.1
Defacing of materials	15	10
Relocation of materials by student	40	26.6
Total	150	100

Table 5 above reveals a frequency of 50(33.3%) for mutilation of reference information sources. 45(30.1%) mishelving of materials, 40(26.6%) relocation of material from reference section of the library to other floors in the library while 15(10%) deface materials by painting, underlining or making comment on the type face of the materials. An effective use of reference information resource is greatly enhanced by the awareness and knowledge of how to use the library catalogue and enforcement of use of library as a course unit in the university will be of great advantage to the student and the library system.

Findings

From the study, it can be concluded that student have not been participating very well in library orientation organized by the library and most of the users of reference information sources lack the technical know-how of the use of reference information sources.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The major conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that most of the respondents are aware of reference and information service in the library but they lack the knowledge and technical know-how to approach the materials. It is evident that most of them who come to use the reference materials have not

been requesting for assistance and guide from the reference librarian.

The university should re-introduce use of library as a course unit with minimum of 1 credit unit not as a zero base credit unit. There is need for proper library orientation for all library users.

A reference guide should be provided on how to use some reference materials. For instance encyclopedia abstracts and indexes. Above all the reference librarian should be patient in discharging their duties by interacting more closely with users to be able to identify their information needs in a reference environment.

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