



Undergraduates Perception and Utilization of Serial Materials in University of Delta, Agbor Library, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined undergraduates' perception and utilisation of serial material in University of Delta, Agbor Library. The study population comprised 112 registered library users' registration statistics 2022/2023 academic session. The instrument used for data collection in this study was questionnaire. The major findings of the study revealed that the majority of the students used serial materials for research purpose, assignment, examination and current affairs whereas majority of the respondents used serial material occasionally and regularly while journals and newspapers were the most consulted serial materials. The major constraints facing students towards accessing serial materials in the University of Delta, Agbor were lack of finance, lack of professional librarians, irregular supply of dailies, unstable Internet and unstable power supply. The followings recommendations were made; there is need for the library management to ensure that professional librarians should head serial section of the library for efficiency, University management should put more funds to serial section and increase the Internet bandwidth and Management should accelerate action on solar system which is very indispensable as far as serial unit is concerned.

Keywords. Students, Perception, Use, Serial Resources, University, Library.

Introduction

Academic libraries are valued for their expertise in providing current information resources such as serials to complement teaching, learning and research (Blackwell, 2014). University libraries acquire, organise, store, and retrieve and dissemination information contained in serials for researches, educators, students and other interested persons in their various disciplines. There are many kind of serials. These include newspapers, magazines, accessions, journals, indexes, abstract, reports, proceedings and transactions of societies and so on. Kidd, (2001) explained that the definition of a serial has not changed significantly over the years. The author culled from the second edition, 1998 revision of the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) which defines a serial as 'a publication in any medium issued in successive parts bearing numeric or chronological designations and intended to be continued indefinitely. This definition includes online (although continuous updating is a feature of some e-journals, as opposed to publication 'in successive parts'), print, microform, and CD-ROM journals, and, for example, newspapers and popular magazines as well as academic journals.

In addition, Tomomowo-Ayodele and Hameed (2018) are of the view that serials are regarded as materials that are in tangible format, that is recorded on paper, microfilm, magnetic media or optical disk and retrievable. Sambo and Akpojotor (2016) affirmed that, periodicals are useful because they are the most up-to-date resources in the library and that the articles in periodicals are often written by experts in the field, therefore, they are reliable and the articles are precise and not as cumbersome to read as textbooks. Academic libraries must therefore provide the latest journal titles in all the subjects/courses covered by its parent institution and also, staff and students are expected to make use of the library most especially the serial section of the Library to get current information in their chosen field of study. However it is a verity that University of Delta Agbor, library serial section provides contemporary and up to date information resources including journal, newspapers, newsletters and library guide and so on that are useful for researchers to support their research findings. As a result of the impact of serial publications on research, this article expects to establish researcher's insight on the serial materials use by the undergraduate students of University of Delta Agbor Library.

Statement of the Problem

Serial publications are information resources that bear current information. They are in various formats. They help to support academic works in the college community. The publications called serial are the spinal cord of research in the academic world. Students, lecturers and other researchers should bear it in mind that without serial publication, research cannot be done orderly and efficiently. However, in spite of the fact that the University of Delta Agbor library management has made a worthwhile efforts to acquire the resources for the use of patrons and researchers, the situation of the serial section at University of Delta, Agbor library need to be investigate whether students were making use of it or not. This is the case of University of Delta Agbor, library (Serial Unit). It is on this note, that the researchers want to find out the use of serial materials by undergraduate students of University of Delta Agbor Library, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine the use of the serial materials by undergraduate students in University of Delta Agbor, Delta State. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Know the purpose of using serial materials in the University of Delta, Agbor library
- ii. Examine how frequency the students use the serial materials
- iii. Identify the most consulted serial materials by the undergraduate students; and
- iv. Investigate the factors that hinder effective use of serial materials by the undergraduate students.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ogunniyi, et al (2011) asserted that the majority of the respondents, 21 (70%) used the serials section for research purposes while 1(3.3%) used it for relaxation and to be acquainted with current information. Additionally, Chitumbo, Chipasha, Tembo and Banda (2015) carried out a study on access to and usage of print serial publications in the University of Zambia (UNZA) Library and revealed that minority of the respondents indicated that they use the serials collection for their academic work while the majority do not. Among the information resources that

respondents mentioned that they use were journals, magazines, newsletters, reports/reviews, and bulletins. Kumah (2015) observed that students rely heavily on journals (print and online) theses and dissertations as well as periodical literature for their research productivity. In the same vein, Olanlokun (2015) confirmed that journal articles, textbooks, theses and dissertation, monographs, treatises and government documents were considered very important to the job performance of the Nigerian academics. Sambo and Akpojotor (2016), states that serials publication, including journal and other periodicals constitutes the most important class of materials found in an academic library, because they contain the most up-to-date information. It is generally acknowledged that serial publications play an important role in research. According to Wise and Fisher (2015) serials will continue to make a special impact on the scholarly community as they contain the most current and vital information on various disciplines.

Owolabi, Aderibigbe, Okorie and Ibrahim, (2012) opined that serials formed the backbone of research collections, as a result, academic libraries cannot do without it because of the effectiveness to students, researchers, scholars, and investigators. They see serial collections as sine qua non to the development of research activities in academic environment. In other word, Serials are essential tools of teaching and research in academic endeavour and remain a possible tool for dissemination of knowledge. In support, Nutsupkui and Owusu-Ansah (2017) advised serial librarians to utilize creative marketing strategies to raise user awareness of print journals and give them more options. More so, Waikato University (2015), serials could be academic journals whereby they are written by experts and researchers in the academic and professional communities and have a target audience of those in the same field of study including students. These types of serials are normally expected to have in-depth articles and current information and statistics. On the other hand, popular and general interest serials may contain articles of lesser intensity and penetration on a wide range of topics, discussions of ideas and events meant for any one such as non-professional magazines and newspapers. Libraries collect both types of serials.

Moustapha and Abdurrahman (2022) in their users' perception and utilization of serial resources in the academic library, Kwara State University, Nigeria affirmed that most users indicated the use of serial materials either occasionally or often. This was based on the fact that a large proportion used the university library from time to time. Users used the serial resources more in their research work and for examination purposes The study of Aghauche (2007) focused on availability, accessibility and utilization of serials in Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan and found out that (67%) of the majority of the respondents visited the serials section occasionally, some other group visited it regularly while only one or 1% visited it daily. The study also revealed that majority of them used it for research and reference purposes. Kanwar Library (2019) promised that magazines should be ethically and effectively bought whenever possible at a cost that is affordable and readily available. Additionally, in this regard, the value of periodicals is crucial for students to interact with people in general. Likewise, Ntui and Udah (2015) study on the use and accessibility of library resources, found that respondents were unable to use reliable information sources because they couldn't get to them in the library. The acquisition, prominence, and accessibility of magazines in the library are just a few of the variables that may affect how research students use them. Okorie and Akanwa (2018) reported that, despite the emphasis placed on the use of periodicals in university libraries, there is a decline in their usage among postgraduate students. This view correlates with the one by Abubakar and Adetimirin (2017) that research students' use of periodicals in Nigeria is on the downside. Likewise, Moustapha and Abdurrahman

(2022), newspapers, were used more frequently than other media and many users reported never having used newsletters. Nutsupkui and Owusu-Ansah (2017) in their study indicated that newspapers were mostly used by respondents, followed by journals whereas the proceeding took the least among others. Ogunniyi, et al. (2011) examine the usage of serial publications by the students of the School of Arts and Social Sciences in Ondo State Adeyemi College of Education Nigeria. The researchers found that (66.7%) of the respondents used the serial section while 3(3.3%) did not. The majority (70%) used the serials section for research purposes while (3.3%) used it for relaxation and to be acquainted with current information.

Moustapha and Abdurrahman (2022) in their study users perception and utilization of serial resources in the academic library, Kwara State, Nigeria. The study identified that newspapers, periodicals, and journals were used more frequently than other media. A greater number of users reported never having used the newsletters. Aiyepoku (1988) as cited by Sambo and Akpojotor (2016) said that newspapers and magazines ranked most consulted information materials used by policy-makers in Nigeria. These resources enclose government rules, decisions and actions on financial, social and governance for the comfort of the society. Therefore, Ogunniyi et al. (2011) emphasised the low use of serials to the perception that print journals, for instance, are old and scanty. Nutsupkui and Owusu-Ansah (2017) in their studied indicated that newspapers were mostly used by respondents, followed by journals whereas the proceeding took the least among others. In the case of Bamidele, Omeluzor and Amadi (2013), who worked on the perception of undergraduate students of Babcock University towards the utilization of journal articles for final year research (projects), findings indicate that students make more use of past students' projects and textbooks compared to that of journals which is a serial material.

Likewise, Ogunniyi, Akerele, and Afolabi (2011) stated that of all the serials subscribed by any library, journals are the most important to researchers because much of the articles therein are products of research and it may never appear in any other publications. No wonder Sambo and Akpojotor (2016), emphasized that journals are the most current vehicles of new ideas, knowledge and breakthrough in scientific development. The level of utilization of journals in universities differs despite the huge investments in journal subscription. The study further revealed that journals, magazines, and newspapers were used more regularly than others. Similarly, Olubiyo, et al, (2020) studied awareness, accessibility, and use of serial publications among undergraduate students of Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo that claimed that journals are the most current carriers of new thoughts, information and breakthrough in scientific development.

Oubiyo, et al, (2020) found that factors militating against undergraduate students in using serial materials include lack of current serials collection, material mutilations, poor internet service and lack of knowledge about how to use journals for research, unfriendly library staff, inadequate staff, and difficult access to material. Therefore, several studies have identified the challenges militating the use of journals by undergraduate students. They include (Aworo and Kikiri, 2023; Sambo and Akpojotor 2016; & Chitumbo, et al. 2016; Ogunniyi, Akerele, Afolabi 2011) such as poor searching skills, inadequate orientation, outdated resources, lack of journals in my areas, epileptic power supply, scarcity of resources, inconvenient opening hour/closing hour, periodicals are not properly arranged and delay in supply of dailies. Tyagi (2014) and Kisiedu (2018) in their separate studies commented on the declining budgetary allocations in most tertiary institutions in Africa which have great negative impact on the availability and adequacy of serial publications in

libraries. Consequently, African scholars depend heavily on gifts and donated materials from foreign countries for information for their research even on local issues. This scenario seriously affects research output of students in developing countries, including Nigeria, as much time, fund and energy are wasted trying to track down these foreign information resources.

METHODOLOGY

A survey research was adopted for this study. The population was the 112 undergraduates registered students (Registration Statistics 2022/2023 academic session). A census sampling technique was adopted in the distribution of 112 copies of the questionnaire to the faculty at the university of Delta Agbor, library. A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the Faculty of Art, Faculty of Computing, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Environmental Science, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Science, Faculty of Management and Social Science. Two (2) research assistants were used in the administration of the questionnaire which was carried out over a period of 4 weeks. The questionnaire was divided into two sections namely (A) Background information and (B) purpose of using serial materials, frequency of use the serial material and undergraduates constraints faced in the used of serial materials. Out of 112 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 96 were found usable given a return rate of 85.7% response rate. The data collected for this study was analysed using the sample percentages and frequency count.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

		N=96	
Demographic Variables		Freq.	Perc.
Gender	Male	35	(36.4%)
	Female	61	(63.5%)
	Total	96	(100%)
Faculty	Art	10	(10.4%)
	Computing	13	(13.5%)
	Education	15	(15.6%)
	Engineering	7	(7.2%)
	Environmental Science	12	(12.5%)
	Law	9	(9.3%)
	Science	11	(11.4%)
	Management & Social Science	19	(19.7%)
	Total	96	(100%)

Source: Field work 2023

Table 1 above indicates that 36.4% of the respondents are male, 63.5% are female and the majority of the participants are from faculty of management and social science (19.7%). The population of the female that is higher than the male maybe as a result of social science courses offered by the University.

Table 2: Purpose of using the Serial Materials

Purpose	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	No	%
For research	83	86.4%	10	10.4%	3	3.1%	-	-
Assignment	53	55.2%	23	23.9%	9	9.3%	11	11.4%
Examination	43	44.7%	19	19.7%	22	22.9%	12	12.5%
Current Affairs	36	37.5%	29	30.2%	12	12.5%	19	19.7%
Lectures	20	20.8%	18	18.7%	32	33.3%	26	27%
Leisure	15	15.6%	31	32.2%	38	39.5%	12	12.5%

Source: Field work (2023)

Findings presented on table 2 indicate that the undergraduate students in University of Delta Agbor, used the serials materials for various purposes. Use of serials for research purpose ranked high as 86.4% mainly for research activities why the major reasons is to do assignment, examination and current affairs. The students rarely used serials to augment the lectures given them or leisure time.

Table 3: How often the Students use the Serial Materials

Use of Serial Materials	Frequency	Percentage
Occasionally	44	45.8%
Regularly	40	41.6%
Rarely	7	7.2%
Not at all	5	5.2%
Total	96	100%

Table 3 above reveals how often the undergraduate student in University of Delta Agbor, use the serial materials. The respondents indicated that 45.8% of them use the serial materials occasionally, 41.6% respondents use regularly whereas 7.2% of them use the serial materials rarely and 5.2% of them not use the serial materials at all.

Table 4: Most consulted Serial Materials

Most Consulted Serial Materials	Frequency	Percentage
Journals	51	53.1%
News papers	19	19.7%
Magazines	15	15.6%
Reports	6	6.2%
Brochures	5	5.2%
Total	96	100%

Table 4 above reveals serial materials consulted mostly in the University of Delta Agbor, library. The respondents indicated that 53.1% of them consulted journals while 19.7% of them consulted newspapers. Journals and newspapers are the most consulted information materials. This may be as a results of occurrence of the information.

Table 5: Obstacles faced in the Use of Serial Materials

Obstacles	Frequency	Percentage
Lack of finance	92	95.8%
Lack of professional librarians	89	92.7%
Irregular supply of daily's	76	79.1%
Unstable Internet	65	67.7%
Unstable power supply	52	54.1%

Source: Field work (2023)

Table 5 shows obstacles that undergraduate students face in accessing serial materials at the University of Delta, Agbor Library. The results show that all the listed challenges have been experienced by at least, 95.8% of the respondents.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study indicated that students at University of Delta, Agbor used the serial material for numerous purposes. This finding is related to that of Ogunniyi, et al (2011) which asserted that majority of the respondents used the serials section for research purposes.

The findings showed how often the undergraduate students used serials materials. This finding is in consonance with that of Moustapha and Abdurrahman (2022) which opined that most users indicated that they used serial materials either occasionally or often.

The study further indicated serial materials mostly consulted at the University of Delta Agbor, library such as journals and newspapers. This is in line with the finding of Olubiyo, et al, (2020) which opined that journals are the most current carriers of new thoughts, information and breakthrough in scientific development. The findings revealed that University of Delta Agbor faced diverse obstacles towards accessing serial materials which includes lack of finance, lack of professional librarians, irregular supply of dailies, unstable Internet, unstable power supply. The outcome of this study conforms with that of Aworo and Kikiri (2023); Sambo and Akpojotor (2016) which established several factors were found to be militating against the efficient and effective use of serials resources in the libraries which include lack or borrowing facility/lack of journals in my areas, inadequate searching skills to locate materials, epileptic power supply /

scarcity of the resources / inconvenient opening / closing hour, outdated information serials resources, inadequate manpower to provide effective services, periodicals are not properly organised for easy access and irregular supply of daily.

Conclusion

From the analysis, it might be established that there are some students at University of Delta, Agbor, who do not use the serial section of the library as expected, because of the notion that serial section were lack of finance, lack of professional librarians, irregular supply of dailies, unstable power supply. The serial section library can make its collections more useful if the gaps identified from the study can be addressed through the following recommendations which are made based on the findings from the study. The following recommendations are made from the study:

- 1) There is need for the library management to ensure that professional librarians should head serial section of the library for efficiency.
- 2) University management should put more funds to serial section and increase the Internet bandwidth
- 3) Management should expedite action on solar system which is very essential as far as serial unit is concerned.

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