

Users' Perception of the Factors Hindering Book Availability, Accessibility and Utilization in University of Cross River State Library Calabar

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Abstract: This study was to determine users' perception of the factors hindering book availability, accessibility and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar. A survey research design was used while questionnaire was administered to 220 library users randomly selected from 25,347 registered users of the University library, 203 questionnaires were returned, 16 of the returned questionnaires were rejected because they were not completely filled. A total of 187 questionnaires were used for the analysis. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean score). The findings revealed that insufficient subvention to libraries for purchase of information materials, general books scarcity and cost of library materials were the major factors hindering book availability, accessibility, and utilization. The results also show that non-availability of the required documents within the users time constraint and lack of knowledge of information resources available in the libraries which could satisfy the users' information needs were the foremost factors that inhibit book accessibility and utilization, while review of closed access policy in libraries and strengthening national initiatives on book development were seen as possible strategies for the improvement of book availability for enhanced users' satisfaction in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar. The study recommends that: Annual budget allocation to the university library should be improved. A comprehensive tools and retrieval devices should be provided in order to direct users to specific locations of information resources in the library. The indigenous commercial publishers and authors should be encourage to engage on scholarly publication.

Keywords: *Users' Perception, Availability, Accessibility, Utilization and University Library.*

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Introduction

In every university, the library is one of the most critical service departments through which the university achieves the main purpose for its establishment. The library is an information resource center that serves the whole university community and the general public. Its primary aim is to support teaching, learning, and research activities as well as provide recreational and community services, an objective which is achieved through a systematic acquisition, storage, organization and dissemination of all forms of recorded and undocumented information for the purpose of reading, study, research, consultation and recreation in all fields relevant to the programmes of the university (Ogar, 2021).

The university libraries play a pivotal role in supporting academic programs by providing timely access to information resources, particularly books, which are essential for learning, teaching, and research. However, the effective utilization of these resources can be significantly impacted by factors affecting their availability and accessibility. Availability refers to whether the required books are present in the library's collection, while

accessibility denotes the ease with which users can retrieve and use them. Utilization, in turn, reflects how often and effectively these books are used by students and academic staff.

The university library is the hub of academic activities in the institutions, it is a store house of knowledge, a large reservoir from which information can be tapped. As an information-based resource center within the knowledge communication system, the university library serves as a generating and depository mechanism for ideas. The quality of a university is measured largely by the quality of its library because of its unique role in the university system (Ogar, 2021). University libraries play a crucial role in supporting academic and research endeavors by providing access to information resources. However, many university libraries face challenges in providing adequate book collections, accessible facilities, and user-friendly services (Ogar, 2024).

When S. R Rangathan formulated his five normative principles of library work, embodied in the five Laws of Library Science, published in 1931 according to Aguolu and Aguolu

(2002) as cited by Inyaka (2024) he laid emphasis on book utilization (use) rather than preservation of information resources by making it first of the five laws of library science, thus:

- Books are for use
- Every reader his book
- Every book its reader
- Save the time of the reader
- Library is a growing organism

Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) in Inyaka (2024) further stressed that, despite man's efforts to conserve recorded knowledge, various problems abound, which appears to work against these efforts. This in effect imply that library users in university libraries encounter problems or difficulty in their effort to access and utilize available information resources. Expectedly, the library should be organized to minimized the amount of effort required to gain access to needed bibliographic materials and to provide such materials as soon as possible when the need arises. Suffice it to say that, when critically examined, the five laws as stated by Ranganathan points to the fact that library clients' perception of book availability, accessibility and utilization of such books is determined in terms of how well such books meet their academic and research needs and time.

Various theories on availability, accessibility and utilization have been propounded by many library and information science scholars and experts all geared towards the ultimate satisfaction of library service delivery to clients. According to Nwafor (1980) as cited by Inyaka (2024), if use is the library's watchword, it follows that the library collection has to be organized in such a way as to allow for its easy accessibility and retrieval. Both the library of congress classification scheme and the anglo American cataloguing rules are in use in the library. Inyaka (2024) view that, information resources are important to users, these include collection and variety of other information which make access to knowledge the key to judging information resources adequacy. He went further to add that the library staff needs to make users know that they are important and that their services should be appreciated.

Though information is widely recognized as catalyst for both national and personal development Uke (2023) opined that many people, especially in the developing countries, are still unaware of the need for information and this fail to exploit it even when information materials are available for free as in libraries and information centres. This is because availability of information does not necessarily mean its accessibility not to speak of its use. The wealth of information available or in existence in the world today is tremendous and the sheer volume of it, in a variety of formats, makes it impossible for one to have complete access to it.

However, it is obvious that for many developing countries increased availability of books may not mean widespread accessibility, because of the impediment of illiteracy and other limitations. The failure of information flow in developing countries is of two categories and it influence both availability, accessibility and utilization of information resources as identified by (Inyaka, 2024).

- i. The potential user of the information or record does not even try to obtain it.
- ii. The user tries to obtain the information or record but does not succeed

One may attribute the failure to information need of users, when it is available, to any of the following factors:

- i. Lack of awareness of the value of information due to poor education or illiteracy.
- ii. Ignorance of the potential possibilities of the existing information services.
- iii. Failure of the client to appreciate the nature of his problem
- iv. Absence of suitable library and information services.

The inability of the library user, on the other hand, to obtain what he/she wants or demands, which may be different from what he/she actually needs, may result from:

- i. Non-availability of appropriate guides to the existing information sources in the library.
- ii. Failure to approach libraries on his/her problems for whatever reasons.
- iii. Non availability of the required documents thin the users' time constraints
- iv. Non availability of suitable staff to assist the user in locating the needed information or record.
- v. Lack of knowledge of information resources available in other libraries, which could satisfy the users' information need.
- vi. Limitations of access to the appropriate documents, due to administrative or physical hindrances imposed on their use (Inyaka, 2024).

The above assumptions point to the fact that, the university libraries acquire adequate/relevant books and make them accessible to users to use. University library is of no use to its users if it is unable to provide deliver within a reasonable time the reading materials requested.

Despite the critical role libraries play, many university students and faculty members often encounter challenges that hinder optimal use of library resources. These may include insufficient copies of high-demand books, outdated or irrelevant collections, poor cataloging systems, inadequate funding, limited library space, and inefficient staff service (Oyewusi & Oyeboade, 2009; Afolabi, 2021). Additionally, users' awareness, information literacy skills, and technological constraints further influence how they perceive and utilize library books.

Understanding users' perceptions of these barriers is crucial for library administrators and policymakers in order to improve service delivery and enhance user satisfaction. Research in this area provides insights into the specific needs of library users and identifies gaps that need to be addressed to ensure equitable access to academic resources. Previous studies have identified various factors that hinder book availability, accessibility, and utilization in university libraries. These factors include inadequate funding, outdated book collections, lack of access to e-books, and poor library infrastructure (Adeyinka & Tiamiyu, 2015; Okiy, 2017). The literature reviewed showed that availability, accessibility and utilization of information material determine the satisfaction of the users who are eager to read or seek for information. However, there is a need to investigate the users' perception of these factors to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges facing University of Cross River State Library, Calabar.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study is to determine:

- i. Users' perception of the factors that hinder book availability and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar.
- ii. Users perception of the factors that inhibit book accessibility and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar.
- iii. The strategies to improve book availability for enhanced users' satisfaction in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar.

Research questions

The study aimed at addressing the following research questions

- i. What are users' perception of the factors that hinder book availability and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar?
- ii. What are users' perception of the factors that inhibit book accessibility and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar?
- iii. What are the strategies to improve book availability for enhanced users' satisfaction in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar?

Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design. The population of this study consists of 25,347 registered library users of the University of Cross River State Library in the 2024/2025 academic session. A simple random sampling technique was adopted and a total of 220 respondents were selected for the study. A structured questionnaire was developed and administrated to the respondents, 203 were returned, 16 of the returned questionnaires were rejected because they were not completely filled. Therefore a total of 187 questionnaires (85%) were used for the analysis. To determine the reliability of the instrument, A Cronbach Coefficient Alph (α) reliability method was adopted to test the reliability of the instrument which shows a reliability index of .82%. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean score). The criterion mean was set at 2.50.

Data analysis

The data in respect of this study as collected are presented below:

- **Research question1:** What are users' perception of the factors that hinder book availability and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar?

The data used for answering research question 1 were generated by collating users responses on items measuring their agreement and disagreement with factors that hinder book availability and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar. The sum of the scores were subjected to analysis using descriptive statistics (mean score) as shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Users' perception of the factors hindering book availability and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar

S/N	Factors hindering book availability and utilization	SA	A	SDA	DA	Mean	Decision
1	General book scarcity and high cost of library materials	93	42	36	16	3.13	Accepted
2	Insufficient subvention to libraries for purchase of information materials	85	51	43	8	3.14	Accepted
3	Unfavourable impact of foreign input	58	90	21	18	3.01	Accepted
4	Lack of relevance of available books to the Nigerian environment	45	84	30	28	2.79	Accepted
5	The minimum contribution of book development on the part of professors, lecturers and other individuals	36	76	43	32	2.62	Accepted
6	Lack of private and public support for natural programme on book production	64	72	30	31	2.96	Accepted
7	Failure to make book production become social service-oriented rather than being purely based on profit motives	63	72	42	10	3.01	Accepted

In table 1 above, the study revealed that insufficient subvention to libraries for purchase of information materials was rated first with a mean score of 3.14. General books scarcity and cost of library materials was second with a mean score of 3.13. Unfavourable impact of foreign input and Failure to make book production become social service-oriented rather than being purely based on profit motives was third with a mean score of 3.01. Lack of private and public support for natural programme on book production was fourth. It account for a mean of 2.96. Lack of relevance of available books to the Nigerian environment was fifth with a mean of 2.79. While minimum contribution of book development on the part of professors, lecturers and other individuals was sixth. It accounted for a mean of 2.62.

The findings show that all the items have a mean scores above 2.5 criterion mean set for the study indicating a total

acceptance and strong agreement by the respondents on all the items stated. With these findings it implies that all listed item in the instrument were accepted as factors hindering book availability and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar.

- **Research question 2:** What are users perception of the factors that inhibit book accessibility and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar?

The data used for answering research question 2 were generated by collating users' responses on items measuring their agreement and disagreement with factors that inhibit book accessibility and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar. The sum of the scores were subjected to analysis using descriptive statistics (mean score) as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2: What are users' perception of the factors that inhibit book accessibility and utilization in University of Cross River State?

S/N	Factors that inhibit book accessibility and utilization	SA	A	SDA	DA	Mean	Decision
1	Insufficient instructions on library use	58	24	63	42	2.52	Accepted
2	Lack of knowledge of information resources available in the libraries which could satisfy the users' information needs	94	69	18	6	3.34	Accepted
3	non-availability of the required documents within the users time constraint	93	72	22	0	3.38	Accepted
4	Non-availability of appropriate guides to the existing information materials in the libraries	97	72	23	13	3.16	Accepted
5	Non-availability of suitable staff to assist the user in locating needed information or records	79	74	25	9	3.19	Accepted
6	Failure to approach librarians for their problems for whatever reasons	93	42	36	16	3.13	Accepted
7	Limitation of access to the appropriate documents, due to administrative or physical barriers imposed on their use (e.g closed access)	85	51	43	8	3.14	Accepted

In table 2 above, non-availability of the required documents within the users time constraint emerged highest with a mean score of 3.38. Lack of knowledge of information resources available in the libraries which could satisfy the users' information needs was second. It accounted for a mean score of 3.34. Non-availability of suitable staff to assist the user in locating needed information or records was third with a mean of 3.19. Non-availability of appropriate guides to the existing information materials in the libraries was fourth with a mean of 3.16. Limitation of access to the appropriate documents, due to administrative or physical barriers imposed on their use (e.g closed access) was fifth. It accounted for a 3.14. Failure to approach librarians for their problems for whatever reasons was sixth with a mean of 3.13. While insufficient instructions on library use was seventh with a mean of 2.52.

From the above analysis, the study revealed that all the items in the instrument strongly confirm users' perception of the factors that inhibit book accessibility and utilization of information materials in University of Cross River State Library Calabar with all the item having a mean scores above 2.5 criterion mean set for the study.

- **Research question 3:** What are the strategies to improve book availability for enhanced users' satisfaction in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar?

The data used for answering this research question were generated by collating the users responses on items measuring their views on ways to improve availability and utilization to information resources in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar. The sum of the scores were subjected to analysis using descriptive statistics (mean score) as shown in table 3 below:

Table 3: Users' perception of the possible strategies to improve book availability for enhanced users' satisfaction in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar

S/N	Users' perception of the possible strategies to improve book availability for enhanced users' satisfaction	SA	A	SDA	DA	Mean	Decision
1	Intensification of training and research efforts on book publishing	57	90	21	19	2.99	Accepted
2	Relaxing of restrictions on the importation of paper supplies	54	84	30	28	2.78	Accepted
3	Indigenous publishers should invest in young writers	36	76	43	32	2.62	Accepted
4	Government should regard publishing as a public utility	63	72	30	22	2.94	Accepted
5	Subsides to low-cost production of books	63	72	42	10	3.01	Accepted
6	Relaxation of foreign exchange controls on books importation	58	63	42	24	2.52	Accepted
7	Strengthening national initiatives on book development	93	69	19	6	3.33	Accepted
8	Review of closed access policy in libraries	93	72	22	0	3.38	Accepted

In table 3 above, the study revealed that 3.38 mean score of the respondents call for the review of closed access policy in university libraries to make way for the availability of information resources. This is closely followed by a call for strengthening

national initiatives on book development with a mean of 3.33. This is followed by a call for Subsides to low-cost production of books with a mean of 3.01. A call for intensification of training and research efforts on book publishing has a mean of 2.99. Followed

by a call for Government to regard publishing as a public utility shows a mean of 2.94. Relaxing of restrictions on the importation of paper supplies has a mean of 2.78. While a call for indigenous publishers to invest in young writers has a mean of 2.62 and Relaxation of foreign exchange controls on books importation has a mean of 2.52.

From the above analysis, the study revealed that all the items in the instrument strongly confirm users' perception of the possible strategies to improve book availability for enhanced users' satisfaction in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar with all the item having a mean scores above 2.5 criterion mean set for the study.

Discussion

The composition of any university library stock otherwise known as library collection depends on the institutional need as Lucker (1979) states according to Uke (2023) that, the first step to take when launching an overall library collections "is to identify the institutional objectives that the library or learning resources centre is supporting. Agreeing strongly with Hainess (1950) believe, Uke (2023) also believes that a library is the prime means of raising the literary awareness of the community and therefore should contain only the best literature. The position of Hainess (1950) as cited by Uke (2023) further noted was libraries regardless of the type should select books and non-book resources that will advance and enrich the lives of the clients being served by the library".

Bearing in mind the current trend in book scarcity and high cost of information resources, inadequate subvention to public universities and university libraries in particular for purchase of information resources has been a re-occurring inhibitor in strengthening and supporting the relevance of books in the Nigerian environment and public university libraries in particular as revealed in table 1 with a mean score of 3.14. This is in line with Bassey's (2010) view that, poor funding has greatly hindered meaningful development of university libraries. He noted that no library can operate even minimally if staved of funds, thus submitting completing Nyantakyi-Baah, (2016) assertion that the adequacy and quality of information resources required by any library whether they are bibliographical resources, audio visual or instructional aides depend upon the financial resources available at the disposal of such library. In line with this, according to Ifidon (2002) as quoted by Uke (2023) observed that, the Cooley Commission in 1981 recommended that the Federal Government should provide 80 percent of annual recurrent expenditure of each of the federal universities. This is in line with the 1992 ASUU and Federal Government of Nigeria Agreement that raised the annual allocation to university libraries from 5 percent to 10 percent of the universities recurrent budget.

Respondents in table 2 agreed that non-availability of the required documents within the users time constraint and lack of knowledge of information resources available in the libraries which could satisfy the users' information needs are foremost factors that inhibit book accessibility and utilization in University of Cross River State Library with a mean score of 3.38 and 3.34 respectively. To overcome these factors, Adeyoyin (2011) observed that user education must be given top priority to enable the library users make effective use of the resources available as well as be aware of the presence of print and non-print materials available in their disciplines, use the varied information sources to

solve academic problems and be independent in accessing the library materials for effective research work.

Review of closed access policy in libraries and strengthening national initiatives on book development in table 3 with a mean score of 3.38 and 3.33 respectively were also seen as possible strategies for the improvement of book availability for enhanced users' satisfaction in University of Cross River State Library, Calabar. As Ebye (2006) rightly observed according to Uke (2023) that there is the need for the provision of a wide variety of up-to-date information resources, both books and non-books to meet the rapid changes of information needs of users in educational programmes. To overcome this obstacle is usually associated with closed access policy in libraries as identified by the respondent, there is need for current issues of a wide variety of other local and foreign journal titles to enable students and scholars to be abreast with developments in their field. According to Inyaka, (2024), the indigenous commercial publishers shy away from scholarly publishing, because of its enormous capital and manpower requirements, high cost of production due to high exchange rate and distribution in a widely dispersed country with poor transportation and telecommunication system. This situation calls for government intervention by subsidizing the cost of book production and relaxing existing restrictions on the importation of papers supply as identified by the respondents in the study.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is obvious that majority of the users of University of Cross River State Library were able to identify the factors hinder book availability and utilization in University of Cross River State Library, factors that inhibit book accessibility and utilization and possible strategies for the improvement of book availability for enhanced users' satisfaction in University of Cross River State Library. Base on the findings of this study, it is therefore recommended that:

- i. Annual budget allocation to the university library should be improved. Also well-meaning individual and non-government agencies should also participate in equipping the university library with information resources (books in particular). While the university library should also adopt other methods of acquiring information resources (books) through gift and exchange, grants etc.
- ii. For easy access and utilization of book availability for enhanced users' satisfaction in University of Cross River State Library, a comprehensive tools and retrieval devices should be provided in order to direct users to specific locations of information resources in the library.
- iii. The indigenous commercial publishers and authors should be encourage to engage in scholarly publication by government and the university authorities through relaxation of foreign exchange controls on books importation, subsidizing book publication cost as well as taking publishing as a public utility by government.

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