

Awareness and Utilization of Reference Resources by Fisheries Undergraduate Students in Universities in North Central, Nigeria

Osasu T. Makinde¹, Aba, Jane² & Esther Bolade³

Ambrose Alli University Library, Ambrose Alli University, Edo State- Nigeria^{1,2,3}
makindetheresa023@gmail.com¹, abajane@auuekpoma.edu.ng², & talk2ozondu@yahoo.com³

Abstract

This study is on awareness and utilization of reference resources by fisheries undergraduate students in universities in North-Central, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research design was adopted and structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Four hundred and fifty seven (457) fisheries undergraduates were sampled using purposive sampling technique. Data were analyzed using percentage, frequency, mean and standard deviation and Null hypothesis was tested. Results revealed that reference resources were available but extents of accessibility and utilization were generally low, constrained included inadequate professional reference staff, outdated and irrelevant resources and waste of time when searching for materials. Null hypothesis was rejected which implies that opinions on accessibility and utilization of reference resources differed significantly.

Key words: Awareness, Utilization, Reference resources, Fisheries students

Introduction

University libraries are major points of awareness through provision of reference resources for quality teaching, learning and research. Reference resources are provided for use through indexing and abstracting services in print and electronic format. Reference resources are information bearing materials in personnel, prints and electronic form used by reference librarians to provide specific and timely information for users. Reference resources include: personnel such as reference librarians, support staff; print materials such as: dictionaries, encyclopedias, research monographs, directories, biographies, almanacs; information retrieval tools such as indexes, abstracts, bibliographies, catalogues and electronic materials such as computers, projectors, CD-ROMS and internet, e-journals, database and e-prints. Unlike other library materials, reference resources are special unique to users because they contain facts that have been brought together from varied sources which are organized for easy and quick access for specific use. They are not meant to be read from cover to cover or borrowed out of the library but are used as sources of finding precise information (Abdulahi & Mamza, 2014). Reference resources are gold-mines of the reference section, their value is inestimable to users who need them to obtain relevant information (Attama, 2013). It should be noted that availability of reference resources in

university libraries does not imply automatic utilization of reference resources instead awareness facilitates users' interest; it is only when students are aware of the available reference resources in university libraries that the issue of utilization can arise. Ademodi (2015) emphasizes that availability of reference resource does not really enhance utilization of the resources; it is only when undergraduates are aware of the availability of the resources that utilization can come into play.

Awareness is a state of being "in the know" or pre-informed about the presence of an item or facility in an environment. In this study, awareness of reference resources means the extent to which library users are pre-informed and knowledgeable about the reference resources available in different formats in the library. This is to enable students know the right resources for a particular information. Iroaganachi and Ilogho (2012) emphasized that it is very important for students to know the appropriate resources to satisfy specific information needs. It is therefore necessary for the proper awareness of reference resources to be provided, otherwise these resources will become old and irrelevant with time and considered as underutilized.

Utilization is the ability to exploit and benefit from certain facilities, items or environment to extent to which library users are able to exploit

and benefit from reference resources in different format to satisfy an information need. Effective utilization by students enhances knowledge and overall academic performance. Mucai (2013) views utilization as taking advantage of an item and benefiting from it, emphasizing that utilization of appropriate resources play an important role in the achievement of educational goals. The extent of utilization determines the quantity and quality of information obtained and consequently, the quality of research output of users. Research output in this study refers to fisheries student's performance in different academic areas such as examination, assignments, seminar papers, undergraduate project report as well as level of technical skill required for quality fish production. There are different categories of library users; they include the public, community or group of specialized users. In the library, fisheries students could be classified as specialized users due to the restricted nature of the course. Ukih (2012) asserts that library users consist of undergraduates, post-graduates; lecturers and research fellows who are mostly subject specialists concentrating on their subject fields.

Fisheries undergraduate students, popularly called "fisher folks" are subject specialists at undergraduate levels of higher institutions undertaking a course of study in fishes and other aquatic organisms as prawns, crabs, periwinkles, in partial fulfillment for the award of Bachelor degree in fishery B. Agric. (Fishery). The Fisheries Society of Nigeria (FISON) and Fishery academics mostly refer to any individual in the field of fishery as "The Basis for Quality Fish Protein Production and Sustainability". Fish is an important source of easily digestible high - quality animal protein (40% crude protein) which offers nutritional values compared to meat and other dairy products (milk). Fish is also an excellent source of Omega H3 fatty acids (fish oil) which is essential for brain development in human. Fish complements the high carbohydrate diets of many regions (FAO, 2007). Currently, one billion people worldwide are reported to rely on fish as their main source of animal protein (Milestone & Lang, 2006). Health workers worldwide often advise on intake of fish for at least once a day to ensure

good health and longevity. Thus, the ultimate goal of any individual in the field of fishery, either as a lecturer, consultant, fishery scientist, fisheries students, should be geared towards obtaining quality information that will enhance quality fish production. This will guarantee sustainability and consumption of quality fish.

Fishery students seems not to be making judicious use of appropriate information resources that can provide quick answers to fisheries-based specific questions which can increase their level of research activities. A close observation by the researcher revealed that the reference shelves are always left desolate while students cluster round other shelves in search of specific information especially textbooks, journals among others. This implies that fisheries students are either not aware of reference services and resources in their university libraries or lack the required skill to retrieve and use vital information from reference resources through the use of information retrieval tools such as indexes, abstracts among others. An investigation into this study is therefore important because when there is an awareness of appropriate reference resources, the provision and use of specific information that may likely enhance practical / productive skill and knowledge in the classroom and fish farm by fisheries students cannot be overemphasized.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate whether fisheries students are aware of reference resources and the extent to which they utilize them. Specifically, the study seeks to;

- i. identify the reference resources available in university libraries in north-central.
- ii. determine the extent of awareness of reference resources by fisheries students in universities in North Central, Nigeria.
- iii. determine the extent of utilization of reference resources for research by fisheries students in universities in North Central, Nigeria.
- iv. identify the constraints to effective awareness and utilization of reference resources in university libraries in North Central, Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

A plethora of studies have been carried out on library awareness and use. This is to enable users make use of the resources they are aware of. Unawareness of library resources could lead to lack of use of library resources which might result to non-existence. Awareness is the act of being knowledgeable or familiar about item(s) or facilities in an environment. The goal of university libraries will not be fully realized if students are not initially aware of the resources rendered. Ademodi (2015) emphasized that the expectations of the library will be fully met if the resources provided are properly structured to facilitate its use adding that librarians are curious of the need to provide services that enhance students' knowledge of resources available in the library as well as the need to maximize utilization of library resources. Awareness of resources facilitates interest for use, it could be ascertained if the resources are relevant or not. If proper awareness of reference resources are not provided, these resources become automatically old and irrelevant with time and considered as underutilized and a waste of resources. Jonathan and Udoh (2015) further implied that information sources which users are not aware of would be underutilized and what is fundamental to library information provision and utilization is to create users awareness of their available resources. This will go a long way to determine the extent of use.

To effectively discharge their services, the operations of university libraries will largely depend on awareness and use of its resources otherwise the resources and services will become old and irrelevant with time. Popoola and Zaid (2007) found that faculty status, membership of library committees, frequency of use of information products and services and frequency of consultations with the library personnel are dependent on faculty awareness of library information product and services. However, availability does not automatically translate to accessibility and use. Ademodi (2015) further noted that apparently, availability of reference resources does not translate to utilization of library resources without awareness. While Namugera (2014) indicates that lack of knowledge among library

users of library resources. The extent of awareness of library resources including reference resources will go a long way to determine users' level of utilization of these resources.

Utilization of a resource is the extent of use to satisfy a need. Utilization can be achieved if there is adequate access to information. Utilization of information resources is the practical and maximum use of library information resources identified by a user for the purpose of solving a problem (Adegboye, 2015). Uhegbu (2007) viewed utilization as the appropriate use of acquired information. Iroaganachi and Ilogho (2014) posited that utilization of resources implies taking advantage of available resources. Proper utilization of reference resources by fisheries students can improve research and overall productivity of fisheries sector in North Central, Nigeria.

Reference resources have been variously defined. Popoola and Haliso (2009) stated that reference resources are information-bearing materials in print and electronic formats used in the library to answer specific and direct questions such as textbooks, journals, indexes, abstracts, newspapers and magazines, reports, CD-ROMS, database, the internet/E-mail, video tapes/ cassettes, diskettes, computers, and so on. The print and non-print materials used in satisfying reference queries are called Reference Resources denoted by "Ref" or "R". Reference services are carried out by Reference Librarians at a Reference Desk. These information materials are the raw materials that libraries acquire, catalogue; stock and make available to users. They are materials needed for reference and information services. Okiki (2013) defined reference resources as materials or books that are only meant for reference purpose. Reference resources according to Ogbuiyi (2015) include dictionaries, atlases, and almanacs e.t.c which are research tools that are used in writing papers or projects. Onifade and Sowole (2011) also defined reference resources as books, collections, or materials that are consulted in the library alone and not meant to be borrowed out, they are not to be read from cover to cover but to answer specific question.

Utilization of reference resources especially in the developing countries has not been without problems. Tahir, Mahmood and Shafique (2008) identified the following problems to include: poor library organization, lack of user skills; poor funding of libraries, lack of current information resources; lack of adequate/relevant materials, poor IT infrastructure; non-conducive reading environment, poor power supply; lack of technical support and lack of user education programs. Most fisheries students in North Central Universities do not have access to fisheries related information materials while others claimed not to be aware or lack knowledge of what reference services and resources is about in the library. Abdulahi and Mamza (2014) are of the view that lack of access to current information resources could

be challenging in the use of academic libraries by students.

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design. The population of the study comprised 1,630 fisheries undergraduate student. Out of this 457 fisheries undergraduate students were sampled using purposive sampling technique. The research instruments was a structured questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on Awareness and Utilization of Reference Resources by Fisheries Undergraduate Students in Universities” (QAURRFSU). A response rate of 436(95.4%) was recorded. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages (%), Mean ($\bar{X}$) and Standard Deviation (SD) to answer research questions.

Results

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Availability of Reference Resources

	Reference resources:	Available Freq %	Not Available Freq %	Remark
1	Encyclopedias	421 (96.6)	15 (3.4)	Available
2	Dictionaries	422 (96.8)	14 (3.2)	Available
3	Biographies	423 (97.0)	13 (3.0)	Available
4	Indexes	279 (64.0)	157 (36.0)	Available
5	Abstracts	280 (64.2)	156 (35.8)	Available
6	Encyclopedia Americana online	140 (32.1)	296 (67.9)	Not Available
7	Encyclopedia Britannica online	125 (28.7)	311 (71.3)	Not Available
8	Computers/printers	378 (86.7)	58 (13.3)	Available
9	AGRIS	238 (54.6)	198 (45.4)	Available
10	AGORA	225 (51.6)	211 (48.4)	Available
11	FAO	120 (27.5)	316 (72.5)	Not Available
12	EBSCOHOST	87 (20.0)	349 (80.0)	Not Available
	Total/Average Availability	261 (60.0)	175 (40.0)	Available

Table 1 shows the frequencies and percentages of responses on availability and non-availability of reference resources. Result reveals that reference resources such as Encyclopedias has 421 (96.6%) and 15 (3.4),

Dictionaries has 422 (96.8%) and 14 (3.2), Biographies 423 (97.0%) and 13 (3.0), Indexes 279 (64.0%) and 157 (36.0%), while Abstracts has 280 (64.2%) and 156 (35.8). However, Encyclopedia Americana On-line has 140

(32.1%) and 296 (67.9), Encyclopedia Britannica On-line has 125 (28.7%) and 311 (71.3), while computers / printers has 378 (86.7%) and 58 (13.3). Also, AGRIS has 238 (54.6%) and 198 (45.4%), AGORA 225 (51.6%) and 211 (48.4), FAO 120 (27.5%) and 316 (72.5) and EBSCOHOST 87 (20.0%) and 349 (80.0). Thus items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9 and 10

are available with percentages above 50% while items 6, 7, 11 and 12 are not available with percentages below 50%. The average percentage availability of reference resources is 261 (60.0%) while average non-availability is 175(40.0). This shows that reference resources are available.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Extent of Awareness of Reference Resources (N=436)

Reference resources	Mean	SD	Remark
Encyclopedias	3.08	0.85	Great ext.
Dictionaries	3.16	0.81	Great ext.
Biographies	2.16	0.73	Low ext.
Indexes	1.94	0.79	Low ext.
Abstracts	2.12	2.17	Low ext.
Encyclopedia Americana online	1.82	0.78	Low ext.
Encyclopedia Britannica online	1.79	0.74	Low ext.
Computers/printers	2.70	0.72	Great ext.
AGRIS	2.16	0.76	Low ext.
AGORA	2.39	0.82	Low ext.
FAO	2.01	0.63	Low ext.
EBSCOHOST	1.92	0.62	Low ext.
Cluster mean	2.27	0.71	Low ext.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Extent of Utilization of Reference Resources (N = 436)

Areas of Research	Mean	SD	Remark
I use reference services and resources for research on my assignment	2.51	0.86	Great ext.
I use reference services and resources for research for examination	2.43	1.14	Low ext.
I use reference services and resources for research on my project work	2.42	1.02	Low ext.
I use reference services and resources for pleasure	1.98	1.79	Low ext.
I use reference services and resources to know more about people and events in the world	2.42	0.94	Low ext.
Cluster mean	2.35	1.15	Low extent

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of responses on extent of awareness of reference resources. Results revealed that the extent of awareness of reference resources such as; Encyclopedias is ($\bar{X} = 3.08$, $SD = 0.85$), Dictionaries is ($\bar{X} = 3.16$, $SD = 0.81$), Biographies ($\bar{X} = 2.16$, $SD = 0.73$), Indexes ($\bar{X} = 1.94$, $SD = 0.79$), while Abstracts is ($\bar{X} = 2.12$, $SD = 2.17$). Also, Encyclopedia Americana Online is ($\bar{X} = 1.82$, $SD = 0.78$) while Encyclopedia Britannica online is (1.79, $SD = 0.74$). Computers / Printers is ($\bar{X} = 2.70$, $SD = 1.02$), AGRIS ($\bar{X} = 2.16$, $SD = 0.78$), AGORA ($\bar{X} = 2.39$, $SD = 0.82$), FAO ($\bar{X} = 2.01$, $SD = 1.02$) and EBSCOHOST $\bar{X} = 1.92$,

$SD = 1.02$), The cluster mean for extent of awareness of reference resources is ($\bar{X} = 2.27$, $SD = 0.71$) which shows that awareness of reference resources is low.

Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of responses on the extent of utilization of reference resources in different areas of research. The result revealed that the extent of use of resources for Assignment has ($\bar{X} = 2.51$, $SD = 0.86$), examination has ($\bar{X} = 2.43$, $SD = 1.14$), project work ($\bar{X} = 2.42$, $SD = 1.02$), pleasure ($\bar{X} = 1.98$, $SD = 1.79$) and to know more about people and events in the world ($\bar{X} = 2.42$, $SD = 0.94$). The cluster mean for use of reference services and resources in

different areas is ($\bar{X}$ =2.35, SD= 1.15). This implied that the extent of utilization of

resources in different areas of research is low.

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation of Constraints to effective Awareness and Utilization of Reference Resources. (N = 436)

Constraints	Mean	SD	Remark
Inadequate professional staff to assist me.	2.76	0.78	Agree
There are old and irrelevant resources for my course.	2.75	0.95	Agree
lack of skill / knowledge by students	2.64	0.74	Agree
I waste a lot of time when searching for materials.	2.72	0.86	Agree
The librarians are not user-friendly.	2.67	0.91	Agree
Cluster mean	2.71	0.85	Agree

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation of responses on the constraints to effective access and use of resources in the library. The result revealed that inadequate professional reference staff has ($\bar{X}$ = 2.76, SD =0.78), old and irrelevant resources has ($\bar{X}$ = 2.75, SD =0.95), lack of skill / knowledge on how to use reference resources ($\bar{X}$ =2.64, SD =0.74). Waste a lot of time ($\bar{X}$ =2.72, SD =0.86), the librarians are not user-friendly ($\bar{X}$ = 2.67, SD =0.91). The overall cluster mean for constraint is ($\bar{X}$ = 2.71, 0.85). This shows that there are constraints militating against effective awareness and utilization of reference resources by fisheries students.

Discussion of Findings

Availability of reference resources for fisheries students

Results revealed that reference resources were readily available in the university libraries understudy. This implied that university libraries have the capacity to provide effective and efficient reference resources delivery to meet institutional goals of teaching, learning and research and as such, fisheries students can benefit from them to meet specific information needs. The findings agreed with Ogbuiyi (2015) that reference resources were available to the undergraduate students for maximum use in Babcock University Library, Ogun State, Nigeria. The result also agrees with Adegboye (2015) that information resources were available to users. Similarly, the findings correspond with Azubuike (2014) that the resources were available to the undergraduate students in Colleges of Education in Anambra and Enugu State, Nigeria. Findings are in tandem with Aba (2013) that electronic reference resources were greatly provided.

However, these findings disagreed with Abdulahi and Mamza (2014) that reference resources were not readily available to the undergraduate students.

Extent of awareness of reference resources for research by fisheries students

Results revealed that the extent of awareness of reference resources by fisheries students in universities in North Central, Nigeria was generally low. This implies that information resources which users are not aware of are likely underutilized. The findings of this study supports the findings of Ademodi (2004; 2015) that majority of the undergraduate students were not aware of reference resources available in the university libraries. In the same vein, the findings of this study agrees with findings of Namugera(2014) that the low level of awareness services offered in a Ugandan University library were not sufficient to propel effective use of the library resources. The findings of this study is also in line with findings of Osinulu in Onifade., Ogbuiyi and Omeluzor (2013) that lack of awareness of library services and resources results in low extent of use by students. However, the findings of this study disagree with findings of Abdullahi and Mamza (2014) that majority of respondents were aware of reference services and resources as well as their functions and values. Furthermore, the opinions of fishery students in these libraries were found to differ significantly on the awareness and utilization of reference services and resources. This probably implies that students do not have knowledge of reference resources and as such do not know their values and functions in seeking specific information. From the result on awareness, it can be deduced that the low extent of awareness was perhaps as a result of inability of university libraries to create

effective awareness services such as exhibitions and display, and inactive participation of the libraries in book selection policy.

Extent of utilization of reference resources for research by fisheries students

Results revealed that the extent of utilization of reference resources by fisheries students was generally low. The results of this study negate the main purpose of reference resources because reference resources basically provides users with specific, timely and accurate information, besides the extent of utilization is expected to determine the quantity and quality of information obtained for research output of users. This result is very surprising as fisheries students in all the libraries under study did not utilize reference resources in majority of the different areas of research except majorly for assignment purpose. The findings of this study is in accordance with the findings of Abdulahi and Mamza (2014) that majority of the undergraduate students utilized reference resources for assignment purpose to a great extent. The findings of this study also confirm the findings of Ademodi (2015) that assignment purpose recorded a great extent of use. The outcome of the result of this study that the extent of utilization was low corresponds with the outcome of the study by Adegboye (2015) and Azubuike (2014) that the extent of utilization of reference resources was not impressive. However, the findings of this study negates the findings of Afebende and Ebaye (2008) that reference services and resources were mostly utilized by staff to prepare lecture notes for teaching. From the result on utilization, it is possible that the low extent of utilization was perhaps attributed to low extent of awareness and accessibility of reference resources.

Constraints of awareness and utilization of reference resources

Results revealed that fisheries students in the universities under study were constrained by numerous factors among which were; inadequate professional reference staff, old and irrelevant resources, waste of time when searching for materials, unfriendly attitude of staff and lack of skill / knowledge on how to use information retrieval tool e.g abstract to access vital information. These could imply

that fisheries students were not satisfied with the reference resources provided by the universities under study. The result of findings of this study is in agreement with the findings of Onifade and Showole (2011) that reference materials available to students were very old and not relevant for use. Findings of this study agrees with findings of Afebende and Ebaye (2008) that challenges militating against the use of library resources were due to lack of current books, journals, E-resources, irrelevant database and materials. This result of this study also corresponds with the findings of Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) that the major challenges encountered by students were lack of professional staff and waste of time. The outcome of this study further supports the findings of Ajayi (2010) that a good number of students do not make use of library resources for various reasons such as lack of awareness, lack of professional staff, unconducive library atmosphere. In the same vein, the result of this study confirms the result of Onifade (2011) that information utilization is constrained by lack of awareness, bibliographic obstacles, hostile environment, poor infrastructure, inadequate professional staff, non-involvement of staff in book selection and SDI (Selective Dissemination of Information) services.

Conclusion

It is the conclusion of this study that fisheries undergraduate students in North-Central Nigerian universities lacked awareness of reference resources. This has also hinders to utilization of these resources. Usage was low despite the availability of reference resources to fisheries in the libraries. This has negatively affected the level of research among fisheries undergraduate in universities in North-Central Nigeria.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

1. awareness programs on the available reference resources in the library should constantly be given to students to increase the level of awareness of information provision in the library. This would further enhance the extent of students' use of reference resources.

2. provision of adequate reference resources to meet the information needs of Fishery students for research work.
3. Fishery students should be encouraged to use reference resources for research work and other academic purposes since the Universities under study have the capacity to provide reference resources. This will go a long way to improve utilization.
4. the constraint of inadequate professional staff encountered by fisheries students could be addressed if reference librarians are encouraged to vigorously pursue continuous training programs through seminars/workshops and other professional education courses on reference services and resources to improve themselves and become relevant in their profession.

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