



## Reference Service Delivery and Students' Satisfaction in Abia State University Library, Uturu, Abia State, Nigeria.

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### Abstract

*The study was carried out to examine reference service delivery and students' satisfaction of Abia state university library. The study was guided with four research questions and one hypothesis formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted descriptive survey research design with a population of 3128 which comprises 1508 male and 1620 female students. The sample used for the study was simple random sampling, using 313 respondents comprising 151 male and 162 female. The instrument for data collection which was designed by the researcher was questionnaire structured in two sections with 55 items. 313 questionnaires were distributed to elicit information from respondents and 301 representing 96% of return rate was retrieved completely filled and used for data analyses. In analyzing the data, mean and standard deviation was used while the null hypothesis was tested using t-test statistics. The findings revealed that reference services needed by students were made available and students were satisfied with some of the services even though they used the reference services to an extent. The study further revealed that the items listed as reasons for non-satisfaction of reference service delivery were all agreed by the students, showing that reference service delivery needs to be improved to give the students the satisfaction they need. From the study, it was concluded that the satisfaction of students for the service delivery depends on the quality and quantity of information services provided by university library. Based on the findings, it is recommended that university libraries should acquire current and relevant reference information and as well embrace the new technology that will help in improving the reference service delivery to their students as this will also attract students in the use of reference services provided.*

**KEYWORDS:** Reference service, service delivery, students, satisfaction, university library



## **Introduction**

The purpose of university library is to provide information resources in relevant areas covered by the courses offered by the parent institution and at the same time provide the services needed to make the users of which students are inclusive meet their specific information needs. Reference service is one of the services provided by university libraries to ensure that students get current and up-to-date information resources that will help them in their academic work. With the introduction ICT in library operations, reference service delivery is important in the promotion of academic research of students in the universities. This will not only enhance their academic performance but will also motivate the students in research activities as they will be exposed to reference resources and services which they may not have known will be of help to them in their academic research. Many students are observed to ignorant of the type of resources available in the reference department and as such do not see the need for the use of reference library.

Library has been an important centre for knowledge provision and lifelong learning. It is a university of the less privileged who are interested in exploring information for the day to day decision. It could be regarded as a public institution charged with the responsibility of information provision and dissemination. Vigeyaluxmy (2015) opines that library is an institution which is specifically established for the acquisition, processing, organization, preservation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information stored in prints and other contemporary formats with the sole aim of serving the needs of users. In meeting the needs of these users, libraries are categorized into different types, such as school, public, national, academic and special. The categorization is dependent on the types of clientele it serves, the parent institution, the scope of resources and services provided by the library. In this study, the researcher will concentrate on the academic library precisely, the university library.

University library as the center of academic activities in the university provides information resources and services in support for the teaching, learning and research needs of the parent institution. These resources are expected to be provided in different formats for effective utilization by users who see library as their last resort in information provision. University library users comprise the students, lecturers, researchers and other professionals and scholars who need current and up-to-date information resources in different formats that will enable them carry out their assignments, research and other day-to day decisions in different areas of work. Library staff are therefore expected to make available library resources with effective access tools that will make for easy retrieval and utilization. User is satisfied when the information he/she needs is provided with less difficulty in retrieval and utilization. Usoro (2019) stated that the success of a university library depends on the services it offers and that it is effective and high service delivery that will support the academic goals of any tertiary institution as well as enhance users' utilization of reference service and satisfaction.

Reference service delivery is an important aspect of service provided by the reference library as it is the most interesting and stimulating aspect of library service that arouse all senses of professionalism because it involves the interaction between the reference librarian and the library user. Reference service brings users close to materials even when they do not know



how to go about it. Reference services are provided so as assist users in locating reference information resources, referring users to where they can get information they need for decision making and in meeting specific information needs of users. Libraries achieve their objectives through the provision of information resources relevant to the needs of their users. Students are the major users of the university library and they need library information resources especially the reference resources for academic activities. Quality library resources are very important in meeting the information needs of users mainly the undergraduate students who are carrying out their first project work as their first research experience.

Nonetheless, it has been observed that the population of students using the reference services and the reference desk seem to be on the decline compared to the number using the circulation and ICT services of the library. The reason may be because of the nature of reference resources acquired and reference services delivered by the library or may be the attitude of reference librarians. However, all these are mere speculations to the declining use of reference services of the university libraries. It is based on this background that the study intends to investigate the reference service delivery and students' satisfaction with Abia State University Library, Uturu.

### **Statement of the Study**

Preliminary observation has shown that students make most use of circulation and ICT sessions of the library for personal reading and assignments and as such do not ask questions that require the use of reference resources and even when the reference services are provided, they do not show interest in them. This may be as result of unfriendly attitude of library staff and lack of skill handling users and other services needed to give the users the satisfaction they need in the utilization of library resources and services. Moreover, with population increase of students admitted in the universities and the inadequate number of staff to manage the number of requests by student, many library staff find this burdensome and at times could not manage the number as they find it stressful. This problem perhaps leads to frustration by students and in other words not satisfied with the service delivery. With the above problems encountered by students as stated above, the researcher assumed that these problems will affect the users' satisfaction with reference service delivery in Abia State University Library, Uturu. This study is expected to find solution to the problems observed.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What are the available reference services in Abia State University Library, Uturu?
- ii. What is the level of satisfaction of the reference service delivery by students in Abia State University, Uturu
- iii. What is the reason for non-satisfaction of reference service delivery in Abia State University Library, Uturu?



## Hypothesis

The null hypothesis was formulated and tested at  $\alpha = .05$  level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference between reference service delivery and reasons for users' non-satisfaction in Abia State University Library, Uturu.

## Literature Review

Provision of information resources has been the mandate of every library irrespective of types. With the global trend in information generation, libraries especially university libraries are striving as much as possible to deliver information at the door steps of their users. These information resources are acquired and classed in different areas of subject and placed in different sections of the libraries to meet the specific information needs of library users. Reference department is seen as an important unit of the library in the provision facts and up-to-date materials that will help in research progress. The reference library houses information materials that are not read cover to cover but are only consulted for a definite purpose. According to Popoola and Haliso (2009), reference materials form part of the raw information materials that libraries acquire and make available to users; and are needed for reference and information purposes. Furthermore, Attama (2013) said that these materials are goldmines of reference section, with highly estimable values in the information/internet age. They are arranged alphabetically or chronologically for easy location of definite information. As a major and outstanding component of library services the concept of reference service keeps developing as library keeps moving from traditional to automated, hybrid and eventually to digital (Awodoyin & Aina, 2018).

The quality of reference collection in library is judged through the quality of its reference services. Edoka (2000) said that the quality of reference services depends upon proper organization of the reference section and that the success of reference services depends on the knowledge and ability of the reference librarian. The library serves undergraduate and postgraduates with adequate information which they are not aware of. This entails that the existence of a university library and stocking up materials and delivering of essential library services is the main focus of the university library. University libraries offer a number of services which may vary in content and quantity.

Reference service is a specific service tailored towards the information needs of each library user hence, giving each individual library user a sense of belonging in the library. Reference service is an integral part of any library aimed at educating users on the use of reference materials to help them get factual information at the possible best way and at the right time. Ifidon (2011) defined reference services as the personal assistance given by librarians to individual readers who are in pursuit of information. Reference services in any library is a sum total of all library activities aimed at facilitating the use of the library and its resources. The service is provided by professionals whose primary task is to identify exactly what the readers want and provide answers to same using one or a combination of books or tools. Ademobi (2015) also said that reference services are the formalized provision of information in diverse forms by reference librarian who is an intermediary between the questioner and the



available information resource. Reference services rendered in university libraries include: abstracting services, indexing services, referral services, selective dissemination of information, users' instruction, current awareness services, photocopying services etc. Usoro (2019) noted that the services offered by university libraries include; answering reference queries, user education, compilation of reading lists, compilation of bibliographies, indexing and abstracting, inter-library loan services and current awareness services. Retting (2012) pointed out that the distinguishing features of reference include a staff designated to provide the service, a collection of reference works accessible to the users in an area set aside for delivery of service, adequate guides to the library resources and high degree of interaction between the staff and the user.

Reference service delivery is essential in providing researchers materials necessary for their research work. Abdullahi and Mamza (2014) stated that reference service is an integral part of any library aimed at educating users on the use of reference materials to help them get factual information at the possible best way and at the right time. The availability of quality reference and information services in libraries has significant influence on students' satisfaction and satisfaction is the user's fulfillment. When users are satisfied with library reference and information resources, they not only come back but speak well of the library to other users. The provision of reference service in academic libraries is regarded as a serious aspect of library services which seeks to satisfy the need of the user in teaching, research and learning. According to Nwegbu(2005), provision of reference services goes beyond the actual use of reference books and daily routine of responding to users queries, it covers anything necessary to help the reader in his/her quest for information, education and knowledge. Solanke and Nwalo(2016) state that reference services have always been essential in academic libraries by meeting undergraduates' information needs for enhanced academic achievement. Furthermore, they stressed that users' satisfaction with reference services has become a great concern, as poor satisfaction of reference services will negatively affect subsequent use and dearth of scholarly research on patronage of reference services by undergraduates in Nigeria. Awodoyin and Aina (2018) carried out an analysis of quality reference service delivery as perceived by undergraduates in selected university libraries in South west, Nigeria and their result showed most of the undergraduate perceived the reference librarian as being helpful, knowledgeable about their queries and that staff were always available to assist them. Motiang, Walis and Karodia (2014) evaluated the resources and services provision and ascertain the satisfaction derived by users of the university of South African library. Furthermore, David-West and Owate (2019) conducted a study on reference services and survey of users satisfaction and it was revealed that there is significant relationship between reference services and users satisfaction. David-West (2019) also said that for there to be effective reference service delivery, there must be sound and quality reference collection. According to Agidahun (2004) a library that cannot meet the information needs of its users is moribund and anaemic in information system because it has lost its vitality, honour and attraction University libraries are therefore encouraged to keep maintaining high level of library resources and services as it leads to students' satisfaction. From the literature reviewed in this study, none of the study focused on reference service



delivery and students' satisfaction in the institution under study. Hence, the gap the study sought to fill.

### **Methodology**

The researcher used descriptive survey research design as it is seen to be the best method for collecting original data for describing a population too large to be observed. A population of 3,128 comprising of 1508 male and 1620 female student were used. A simple random sample was used to select 10% of the population which is 313 to enable the researcher get a meaning and sizeable representation. A questionnaire designed by the researcher with 56 items was used for data collection. The questionnaire is made up of two sections, with section "A" bearing the bio data of the respondents while section B has variable questions divided into clusters of 4 using a 4 point scale. Out of 313 copies of questionnaire distributed, 301 showing (96%) were returned and found suitable for data analysis. Data collected was analyzed using frequency percentage and mean with a criterion mean score of 2.50 used to decide the agreement or disagreement of item statements. The mean score of 2.50 and above was considered agreed while below 2.50 was considered as disagree. Also a hypothesis was tested using t-test analysis technique at 0.05 level of significance. The choice of this technique was based on the difference between two variables. The results were presented using frequency tables.

### **Presentation of Results**

Table 4:1, The available Reference Services in Abia State University Library, Uturu

S/N	ITEMS	Available	%	Not Available	%	Decision
1	User instruction	199	66.11%	102	33.89%	Yes
2	Current Awareness Service	183	60.80%	118	39.20%	Yes
3	Indexing service	183	60.80%	118	39.20%	Yes
4	Abstracting service	194	64.45%	107	35.55%	Yes
5	Bibliographic service	200	66.45%	101	33.55%	Yes
6	Photocopying service	113	37.54%	188	62.46%	No
7	Inter-library loan service	108	35.88%	193	64.12%	No
8	Referral service	165	54.82%	136	45.18%	Yes
9	Reprographic service	110	36.54%	191	63.46%	No

The table above shows the frequency and percentage distribution of the students' response on the reference services available for students in ABSU Library. Library instruction





services(66.11%), current awareness services(60.80%), indexing services(60.80%), abstracting services(64.45%), bibliographic services(66.45%) and referral services(54.82%) were the reference services available for students in ABSU library where as other services like photocopying services (37.54%), Inter-library loan service (35.88%) and reprographic services(36.54%) were found to be below the benchmark of 50% and therefore not available.

**Table 2: Levels of students' satisfaction with the reference service delivery**

S/N	Item statements	Male students n=146			Female students n=155		
		Mean	SD	Ranks	Mean	SD	Ranks
1	User instruction	3.38	0.93	HS	2.70	0.56	HS
2	Current awareness service	3.35	0.92	HS	2.66	0.54	HS
3	Indexing service	3.30	0.91	HS	2.68	0.56	HS
4	Abstracting service	2.66	0.92	HS	3.33	0.54	HS
5	Bibliographic service	2.65	0.93	HS	3.38	0.53	HS
6	Photocopying service	2.39	0.49	NS	2.26	0.64	NS
7	Inter- library loan service	2.32	0.47	NS	2.19	0.62	NS
8	Referral service	3.21	0.89	HS	3.12	0.97	HS
9	Reprographic service	2.34	0.48	NS	2.06	0.41	NS
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>	<b>2.84</b>	<b>0.77</b>		<b>2.71</b>	<b>0.60</b>	

The table above shows that students both male and female have high satisfaction for the items 1, 2,3,4,5 and 8 while 6, 7, and 9 were indicated as not satisfied. All the services the students indicated as not being satisfied with are ones money is paid for the service as such students may find this hard considering the financial implication. Also the cluster mean of male and female students which are 2.84 and 2.71 with standard deviation values of 0.77 and 0.66 respectively revealed the fact that both male and female were homogenous in their responses.



**Table 3:3. Reasons for non- satisfaction of reference service delivery to students in ABSU library**

S/N	ITEM STATEMENTS	Male Students (n=146)			Female Students (n=155)		
		MEAN	SD	RANKS	MEAN	SD	RANKS
1	Poor reference service	3.38	0.86	Agreed	2.74	0.61	Agreed
2	Insufficient reference materials	3.36	0.85	Agreed	2.75	0.56	Agreed
3	Outdated reference materials	2.68	0.57	Agreed	3.43	0.86	Agreed
4	Poor infrastructure	2.64	0.77	Agreed	3.03	0.31	Agreed
5	Inadequate trained personnel	2.97	0.35	Agreed	2.74	0.68	Agreed
6	Poor reading environment	3.30	0.82	Agreed	3.19	0.92	Agreed
7	Poor library orientation	2.96	0.58	Agreed	2.60	0.86	Agreed
8	Lack of reference service skill	3.35	0.80	Agreed	3.05	0.85	Agreed
	<b>Cluster Mean</b>	<b>3.08</b>	<b>0.70</b>		<b>2.94</b>	<b>0.71</b>	

**From** the table, all the male and female students that responded to the questionnaire items agreed on the reasons for non- satisfaction of some of the reference service delivery to students in ABSU library. This agreement of the students is expressed by the mean value of each item that is above 2.50 criterion mean benchmark and the cluster means of 3.08 and 2.94 and standard deviation of 0.70 and 0.71 respectively showing homogenous response from both male and female students of ABSU, Uturu.

### Hypotheses Testing

HO: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the reasons for non-satisfaction of reference service delivery to students in ABSU library.

Table 4:4; t-test analysis of difference between the mean rating of male and female students on the reasons for non-satisfaction of reference service delivery to students.

Variables	Mean	SD	N	DF	t-calculated	t-critical	Decision
Male Students	3.08	0.70	146	299	0.14	1.97	Accepted
Female Students	2.94	0.71	155				

Significant at 0.05 level of significance





The table 4:4 shows that the calculated t-value is 0.14 while the t-critical value is 1.97 at 0.05 level of significant and at 3.01 degree of freedom. Since the calculated value is less than the t- critical value, the null hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the reasons for non-satisfaction of reference service delivery to students in Abia state university library

## **Discussion of Findings**

### **Reference services available for students in Abia state university library**

The findings from the study revealed that the students accepted that reference service delivery for students were available and were used to an extent, these reference services include; user instruction, current awareness service, indexing service, abstracting service, bibliographic service and referral service. This implied that reference library section always focus on the need to provide library users with the service required in meeting their information needs. The priority of every library is how to satisfy their users and it is because of this that reference service section strives to make available all the services needed by users in meeting their specific information needs. This finding agreed with Lawal (2010) that the quality of information provided in academic libraries directly affects the quality of academic programmes in the institutions. However, the study showed that majority of the students is not satisfied with the reference service delivery available for them. This is why Patrick, A. (2015) revealed that the majority of undergraduates in university libraries are not fully satisfied with the quality of reference service delivery modus operandi. Also the result on the hypothesis revealed there is no significant difference between the mean ratings of male and female students on the reasons for non-satisfaction of reference service delivery as it was accepted. This finding is in conformity with Solanke and Nwalo (2016) whose results showed that inadequate time for reference services, lack of current reference materials, poor service quality and unfriendly reference personnel affect patronage of reference services by undergraduates in selected universities in Osun state, Nigeria.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Reference and information service which is the focus of this research is viewed in this study as the direct personal assistance given by librarian to an individual client in meeting his or her information needs. The result of the study shows that the reference services available for students include; user instruction service, current awareness services, indexing service, abstracting service, bibliographic service and referral services. These services were seen to be utilized by students to a high extent but students were not satisfied with most of the services available. Their reasons being that Abia state university library have poor reference service policy, insufficient reference materials, poor infrastructure, inadequate trained personnel, poor reading environment, poor library orientation and lack of reference service delivery skill by staff. Based on these findings, the researcher made the following recommendations:

- ❖ Regular evaluation of reference services should be carried out in the library as this will improve service delivery.



- ❖ Effort should be made to stock the reference sections with adequate current materials for effective reference services.
- ❖ There should be regular training for staff on how to acquire skills necessary for effective reference service delivery.
- ❖ Students should be sensitized on the need for the utilization of reference services available for them.
- ❖ Librarians should see reference service delivery as a new trend in library services that will create relevance to their profession.

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