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Awareness, Motivation and Utilization of the Agricultural Information Resources in the University Library, Federal University of Technology Akure, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the awareness, utilization and satisfaction of users of agricultural information resources in the University Library, Federal University of Technology Akure, Ondo State, Nigeria. Five research questions and two hypotheses were formulated, with 150 copies of the questionnaire distributed to final year students, lecturers and researchers of the School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology (SAAT) and Agricultural Engineering Department, FUTA using the stratified random sampling method, while 125 (83.3%) were retrieved and used for the analysis. Percentage and frequency count were used to analyse the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation and One-way ANOVA were used to test the two null hypotheses. The study revealed higher awareness, utilization and satisfaction of textbooks, journals and the SAAT School Library and lesser awareness, utilization and satisfaction of the electronic resources TEEAL and AGORA. Time factor, lack of awareness and outdated resources were the highest factors responsible for poor utilization of the information resources. The hypotheses confirmed that awareness had a positive correlation with regularity of use of the resources, and that in all but the database AGORA there was no significant difference in the regularity of use by different category of users. The study recommended that publicity techniques such as Selective Dissemination of Information, Current Awareness Service and other methods should be applied to make the resources accessible and available.

KEY WORDS: Agricultural information resources, university library, utilization of information resources

Introduction

Agriculture has always played an important role in the economic development of the Nigerian nation. Based on this premise federal and state governments have relentlessly supported agricultural research by establishing different types of institutions such as research institutes, universities and schools/ colleges of agriculture. Libraries are also created side by side with these institutions to support their research and documentation activities. Libraries attached to institutes or schools of agriculture play the special role of acquiring, organizing and disseminating

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agricultural information in different formats for different categories of users, especially researchers. Libraries are therefore an important part of the network of agricultural knowledge system, National Agricultural Research System (NARS) and Agricultural Research and Development (R &D) system. This knowledge system consists of a complex body of interacting institutions that include policy makers, agribusinesses, researchers in institutes and colleges, consultants and NGOs etc.

University libraries are considered the heart of the University system. Universities that offer agricultural courses therefore depend on the library to support their activities especially with regard to the three acclaimed responsibilities of the university- research, teaching and community development. The library can carry this out effectively through provision of print resources of different types such as grey literature, scientific reports, textbooks, reference materials, journal, conference proceedings and even manuscripts as well as digital resources including institutional repositories and databases which may be online or in other formats like CD-ROMS. This study investigated the available agricultural information resources, the level of awareness of users, their level of satisfaction and the major challenges they experience in their attempts to use these resources.

Literature Review

The role of adequate, timely and relevant information for agricultural development has been emphasized by Popoola (2008). Moreover, access to information has been made easier in the digital age. Yet, it is questionable if many Nigerian university libraries are meeting up with the expectation of providing quality information in spite of the increasing global dominance of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as a veritable source of information. Nonetheless, information technology has continued to have growing influence in the quality and quantity of information available to information users in university communities in Nigeria as attested by Okiki and Asiru (2011). Some important factors necessary for satisfactory service include: knowledge (books, journals, data), personnel, and infrastructure. "The level of utilization by personnel and provided by the infrastructure depends on the type of technology available, compatibility of the technology across the library, the source and level of power to operate the technology, and the capacity of the librarian staff to use the technology. The availability of these resources depends on the level of funding, which is directed by government policy" (Rhoe, Oboe and Shelton, 2010). Poor funding has been the bane of information service and delivery in Nigerian University libraries for some decades now.

Rhoe, Oboe and Shelton (2010) quoting Lawrence et al (2001) maintain that for a library to be effective, its collections must match the expressed needs and information expectations of the university. User studies provide a helpful way to assess the quality of service offered to library patrons. Since libraries vary in the services they provide and their user population Iruoje (1995) opines that libraries must be evaluated independently, and that evaluation must be tailored to library type, collections, and users. Agboola and Bamigboye (2011) assert that library use studies, as an aspect of users' studies are vital aids for effective planning and management in academic libraries and essential for effective service delivery. Ezeala (2009) assessed the level of user satisfaction with library resources of agricultural research institutes and found out that more than three quarters of the respondents indicated that the library services are unsatisfactory and

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ineffective thereby resulting in low productivity. In another study, Ugah (2008) discovered a high level of dissatisfaction with the availability and accessibility of library resources in the University of Agriculture, Umudike. The research underscored the importance of the two factors (availability and accessibility) in the propensity of users to utilize information resources, since availability does not necessarily imply accessibility.

In another research, Ugah (2007) discovered a high frequency of library visits (36.4% daily and 48.1% - 2-3 times a week) among students and staff use of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike. The respondents in the survey indicated a higher interest in reading textbooks (63.6%) followed by reference materials (16.2%). The largest number of respondents (50.6%) rated services and facilities as "fair", while (26.0%) and (11.7%) rated the facilities and services "good" and "poor" respectively. These findings present an unfavourable picture of library services in university libraries. Agboola and Bamigboye (2011) investigated the relationship between the level/year of study of undergraduate students in three Nigerian Universities (University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, University of Ibadan and Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye) and their use of library information resources, as well as the level of satisfaction derived by the students in their use of library resources. The study indicated that use increases as students' level of study increases in two out of the three university libraries investigated and the level of satisfaction varied from university to university, but was generally rated average to high. Agboola (2009), in a study of faculties of Agriculture in three Nigerian universities revealed that students rely mostly on textbooks among the printed resources available in their libraries. The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL) was the most widely consulted electronic database resource.

Institutional Background

University Library, FUTA opened services to the university community in 1983, a year after the University itself was established in 1982. It currently serves the academic community consisting of teaching staff, research staff, postgraduate and undergraduate student populations. There are seven schools in the university consisting of the: The schools of Agriculture (SAAT), Engineering (SEET), Sciences (SOS), Management (SMAT), Earth sciences (SEMS), Environmental studies (SET) and Postgraduate studies(SPGS). The teaching staff postgraduate and undergraduate students (final year) of SAAT and Agric Engineering students of (SEET) formed the population of this study. There are seven departments in SAAT comprising departments of Food Science & Technology (FST), Agricultural Economics & Extension (AEE), Fisheries and Aquaculture (FAT) / Ecotourism and Wildlife Management (EWM), Crop Science (CSP) and Animal Production and Health (APH). Agric. Engineering is domiciled in the School of Engineering and Engineering Technology (SEET). The University Library and the branch libraries located in each school (faculty libraries) serve their various schools to support the teaching, learning, research and community service missions of the University.

There are several collections in the University library including: the serials (periodical) collection, the monograph collection, the reference collection, special collection, the reserved collection, the electronic resources and the audio-visual resources. Each of these collections contains agricultural information resources with closed access except for the monographs, which are located in the reading rooms, and can be borrowed. The University Library provides internet

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Journal homepage: https://www.mbjlisonline.org/

services supported (serviced) by the University ISP and it own. The Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United States supports the University by making the library a depository for her publications. FAO publications are kept in the Unit called Research, Special publications and Government Publications Unit alongside other special collections. The E-Resources Unit also manage some databases specifically relevant to the School of Agriculture and Agricultural resources (SAAT).These databases are the TEEAL and AGORA and some other e- resources and CD-ROMS. In addition, the School of Agriculture has a faculty/ school library located in the SAAT building to support teaching, learning, and documentation for staff and students in the institution. The faculty/ school are also equipped with internet services, a trained library officer and support staff.

Research Questions

This following research questions guided the study:

1. How aware are users of agricultural information resources of the various resources available to them at the FUTA Library?
2. How regularly do users of the agricultural information resources utilize the various resources?
3. How do the users rate their level of satisfaction for specific agricultural information resources?
4. What factors discourage optimum utilization of agricultural information resources?
5. What, in the users' opinion, can improve the utilization of agricultural information resources in the university library?

Hypotheses

The following two null hypotheses were tested in this study:

1. There is no significant relationship between awareness of the resources and the utilization of the resources by the users of the library.
2. There is no significant difference between the level of utilization of various information resources and the different status of users of the library.

Research Method

The study is a survey research that assessed through questionnaire distribution the level of awareness, utilization and satisfaction of agricultural information resources in the University Library by teaching staff, researchers and students of the University. The questionnaire contained eight items broken into two sections - Background Information Section and Awareness, Motivation and Utilization Section. Both Likert-scale and open-ended questions were used to elicit the required data. The questionnaire underwent face validity by colleagues. The teaching staff, postgraduate and undergraduate students (final year) of SAAT and Agric Engineering students of SEET, formed the population of this study. There are seven departments in SAAT comprising departments of Food Science & Technology (FST), Agricultural Economics &

ISSN: 1596 - 1595
Journal homepage: https://www.mbjlisonline.org/

Extension (AEE), Fisheries and Aquaculture (FAT)/Ecotourism and Wildlife Management (EWM), Crop Science (CSP) and Animal Production and Health (APH). Department of Agric Engineering domiciled in the School of Engineering and Engineering Technology (SEET) was also represented in the study. The stratified random sampling technique was used to select 150 respondents, however only 125 questionnaires were returned giving a response rate of 83.3 %. Simple percentages, frequency count, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and one-way ANOVA were used to analyse the data. SPSS 17 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used for the data analysis.

Analysis of Data

Table 1 below shows the distribution of respondents by department and status. Respondents from eight departments were issued copies of the questionnaire as follows.

MBJLIS – Middlebelt Journal of Library and Information Science, Vol. 11, 2013
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Table 1: Distribution of Respondents

Department * Status Crosstabulation

		Status			
		Undergraduate (final year)	Postgraduate	Lecturer/ Teaching staff	Total
Department	AGE	9	4	0	13
	FST	13	5	3	21
	AEE	11	2	3	16
	FAT	16	1	1	18
	CSP	20	4	0	24
	FWT/ EWM	10	1	2	13
	APH	13	4	3	20
Total					

Research Question 1
How aware are the users of agricultural information resources of the various resources available to them?

Table 2: Awareness of Agricultural Information Resources

Title	Frequency	Percentage
Journals	102	81.6%
Textbooks	109	87.9%
Reference materials	71	57.3%
Special collections (FAO Publ.)	53	42.7%
Project / thesis	89	71.2%
TEEAL	15	12%
AGORA	28	22.6%
SAAT (School) Library)	99	79.2%

Table 2 indicates higher awareness of textbooks (87.9%), journals (81.6%), the university library (79.2%) and project/ thesis (71.2%). Though the responses appear high, they are not impressive considering the fact that the respondents are research staff and students, who should

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have high awareness level. Awareness of e-resources TEEAL (12%) and AGORA (22.6%) ranked quite low as shown in the Table.

Research Question 2

How regularly do users of the agricultural information resources utilize the various resources?

Table 3: Regularity of Utilization of Agricultural information Resources

Titles	Very Often	Often	Hardly	Never	Missing
Journals	12 (9.6%)	27 (21.6%)	36 (28.8%)	42 (33.6%)	8(6.4%)
Textbooks	26 (20.8%)	49 (39.2%)	34 (27.2%)	12 (9.6%)	4 (3.2%)
Reference materials	5 (4.0%)	19 (15.2%)	44 (35.2%)	47 (37.6%)	10 (8%)

Table 3 indicates that textbooks (60%), SAAT School Library (48.8%), projects/ thesis (34.4%) and journals (31%) are the most utilized of all the resources judging from the respondents who agreed that they used the sources either "very often" or "often". 62.4% indicated that they 'hardly' or 'never' use journals, this percentage for non-use is too high considering the research value of journals and the category of respondents investigated. The respondents that indicated that they 'hardly' or 'never' use the e- resources TEEAL (93.1%) and AGORA (81.2%)) are also alarmingly high as is the data for special collections (FAO) which shows that 90.1% hardly or never use the collection. The missing data for the E- resources and Special collections (FAO) is also high, showing respondents ignorance about the resources or reluctance to respond to the question. Frequency of utilization of reference material was also low (20.8 %). In general, there is poor utilization of the available agricultural information resources in the Library.

Research Question 3

How do the users rate their level of satisfaction for specific agricultural information resources?

Table 4: Satisfaction derived from specific agricultural information resources

Agricultural Information Resources	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Not satisfied	Missing (No Response)
Journals	24 (19.2%)	41 (32.8%)	33 (26.4%)	27(21.6%)
Textbooks	52 (41.6%)	44 (35.2%)	17 (13.6%)	12 (9.6%)
Reference materials	19 (15.2%)	33 (26.4%)	35 (28%)	38 (30.4%)
Special collection (FAO Publ.)	16 (12.8%)	33 (26.4%)	36 (28.8%)	40 (32%)
Project / thesis	22 (17.6%)	44 (35.2%)	27(21.6%)	32(25.6%)
TEEAL	3 (2.4%)	18 (14.4%)	40 (32%)	64 (51.2%)
AGORA	9 (7.2%)	21 (16.8%)	40 (32%)	55 (44%)
School Library (SAAT)	30 (24%)	44 (35.2%)	24 (19.2%)	27 (21.6%)

Textbooks (76.8%) yielded the highest level of satisfaction among all the resources followed by the school library (59.2%), projects and thesis (52.8%) and journals (52%). The e-

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resources were both found unsatisfactory (TEEAL and AGORA 32% each). There was a high level of non- response for the e-resources, and the special collections. This may imply that since awareness and utilization levels are poor or non-existent for some of the respondents for these particular resources, they are in no position to respond to whether they are satisfied or not with the resources.

Research Question 4
What factors discourage optimum utilization of agricultural information resources?

Table 5: Factors discouraging optimum utilization of agricultural information resources in ranked order

Factors	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Time factor	58	46.4%
Lack of awareness	49	39.2%
Currency of the resources (outdated resources)	39	31.2%
Inconvenience (physical location)	28	22.4%
Power supply	27	21.6%
Uncooperative attitude of staff	23	18.4%
Cost of utilization	16	12.8%

The respondents were asked to indicate which factors constituted a hindrance or discouraged them from using agricultural information resources. The highest factors were time (46.4%), lack of awareness (39.2%) and currency of resources (31.2%). Cost of utilization (12.8%) was the least factor indicated.

Hypotheses 1
There is no correlation between awareness of the resources and the utilization of the resources

Table 6: Correlation between awareness of agricultural information resources and their utilization

Awareness/ Regularity of Use	Pearson correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	N	Decision
Journals	.429**	.000	117	Rejected
Textbooks	.403**	.000	120	Rejected
Reference materials	.481**	.000	114	Rejected
Special collection / FAO Publications	.434**	.000	111	Rejected
Project/thesis	.397**	.000	117	Rejected
TEEAL	.372	.000	105	Rejected
AGORA	.555**	.000	107	Rejected
SAAT, School Library	.363**	.000	114	Rejected

ISSN: 1596 - 1595
Journal homepage: https://www.mbjlisonline.org/

** *Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2 –tailed)*

Correlation analysis results for the relationship between awareness of the availability of each the resources and their utilization show weak positive but significant correlation at 1% level (2 tailed) (since all the values for R are positive and sig. = 0.00). The null hypothesis is therefore rejected. There is indeed a correlation between awareness and utilization of all the resources.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference between the level of utilization for various information resources and the different status of users.

Table 7: One-way ANOVA (summary) for difference in level of utilization according to users' status

Regularity of utilization of resources		df	F	Sig.	Decision
Journals	Between Groups	116	1.276	.283	Accepted
Textbooks	Between Groups	120	.524	.593	Accepted
Reference materials	Between Groups	114	1.507	.226	Accepted
Special Collections (FAO)	Between Groups	110	.159	.853	Accepted
Projects/ Thesis	Between Groups	116	.023	.977	Accepted
TEEAL	Between Groups	104	1.501	.228	Accepted
AGORA	Between Groups	107	15.289	.000	Rejected
SAAT School Library	Between Groups	113	2.022	.137	Accepted

The groups recognised, as "statuses" in this research are three–undergraduate, postgraduate and lecturer /Teaching staff. Table 6 above reveals that there is no significant difference in the use of all the resources by the different category of users (P>0.05) except in the use of the database AGORA. The null hypotheses that there is no significant difference between the level of utilization for various information resources and the different status of users is therefore accepted for most of the resources.

Discussion

According to the findings there was low awareness of the electronic resources TEEAL and AGORA which are databases the University subscribes to. The Special collection like the FAO publications also fell among the last three in ascending order. The implication of this is that the library has not created sufficient awareness about this important category of agricultural information resources. Okorie and Agboola (n.d.) study the availability and use of electronic resources in agricultural university libraries and conclude that these resources are rapidly being appreciated by University libraries for many reasons particularly from the economic point of view as it cuts down on the high cost of subscription to print journals. The survey reveals that

ISSN: 1596 - 1595
Journal homepage: https://www.mbjlisonline.org/

50% of the respondents indicated time-saving as the most important reason for using e-resources, 25% say it is provides up-to-date information while 16.6% indicated ease of use. The low awareness of e- resources implies that the resources are not optimally utilized.

Table 3 indicates that textbooks (60%), SAAT School Library (48.8%), projects/ thesis (34.4%) and journals (33.6%) are the most utilized of all the resources judging from the respondents who agreed that they used the sources either "very often" or "often". Similarly, Ugah (2007) found textbooks to be the most consulted during library visits with 98 (63.6%), followed by reference materials which accounted for 25 (16.2%). In this study 24 (20.8%) respondents indicated that they often/very often consulted reference sources, this shows a similar pattern. 66.7% of the respondents indicated that they "hardly" or "never" use journal. Considering the category of the users (research staff and students) who responded to the questionnaire, the implication is that print journals were either becoming less popular as sources of information or were not well publicised in the Library. Both reasons call for serious action such as special interventions like Selective Dissemination of Information or Current Awareness Services and investigation into the reason these resources do not have a high utilization level, so as to guide future subscriptions. The e-resources and special collections were poorly utilized. This emphasises the need for more awareness about the availability of these resources.

The low satisfaction rating and large number of missing values for the satisfaction derived from electronic resources reinforce the low level of awareness of users of these resources. Meanwhile, textbooks, journals, project/thesis and the school library yielded the highest level of satisfaction among all the resources. The strongest factors that affected the utilization of the resources were lack of time, lack of awareness and currency of the resources. These factors and others have been identified by other researches such as Ezeala and Yusuff (2011) who confirmed that some factors such as obsolete materials and opening hours affect the utilization of library resources. The study revealed that awareness is an important factor in the utilization of every one of the resources. Thus, the higher the awareness the greater the utilization of the resources. Finally, the null hypotheses that there is no significant difference in the use of all the resources by different categories of users was accepted for most of the except. This has also been endorsed by Whitmore (2001) and Agboola and Bamigboye (2011) who assert that information seeking behaviour and utilization of library resources vary depending on students' level of study.

Conclusion

The study revealed a startling underutilization of agricultural information resources in the Library. This is especially evident in the responses from the respondents on their awareness and utilization of e- resources, which are actually available but sparsely used. A modern library stands little chance of satisfying her users without electronic resources. The users' assessment of satisfaction also leaves much to be desired, as none of the resources had a decent rating as

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Journal homepage: https://www.mbjlisonline.org/

satisfactory. It is also obvious that the most important motivating factors to using agricultural information resource in the Library were ease of use (time factor), currency and awareness or knowledge of the availability of the resource. It is unlikely that library patrons will utilize resources they are not even aware exist.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were also put forward by respondents as their opinion on better service delivery:

- Improvement of online and electronic library services;
- Orientation and awareness about available agricultural information resources;
- Subscription to more current journals;
- Cooperative and friendly service from the staff, particularly the porters;
- Improving internet connectivity and bandwidth;
- Improvement in the organisation (shelving) of the resources on the shelves;
- Developing the School library beyond its present level (a better stock; internet access);
- Virtual access to library resources from remote locations;
- Improving access through making borrowing and registration easier.

In addition to these recommendations, there is need to reach out to the users especially the research students and teaching staff by Current Awareness Service (CAS) and Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) as well as Current lists, Exhibitions and displays, newsletters, the library guide, abstracts and other publicity techniques. This way awareness is not only created, but users time is saved as he/she will know exactly what is available in his/her area of research with little effort. This is significant since time was mentioned as one of the factors that discourage users. Most of the users already have online access to electronic databases or have personally subscribed to a variety of open access databases.

The Library can only assert her superior role as information provider and the hub of academic activity in the community by increasing subscription to a wider range of electronic resources and making them more accessible. The print journals the Library subscribes to should be reviewed with the intention of selecting core titles especially if they are not open access. Thus, the Library will remain the ultimate source of essential but “costly” information and the point of last resort. Other agricultural information resources that are less popular like the FAO documents and the thesis need to be organized for ease of use. Additionally awareness should be created about them.

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