Awareness and Utilization of Library Public Access Catalogue by Undergraduate Students of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU) Bauchi, Bauchi State of Nigeria.

Binta Fatima Umar [1]; H.M Abareh [2]; Aminu Abubakar Basaka [3]

SeniorLibrarian [1]; Deputy University Librarian [2]; Librarian I [3]

ABUBAKAR TAFAWA BALEWA UNIVERSITY LIBRARY,

0248, BAUCHI- NIGERIA

fatimabinta.umar@yahoo.com [1]; hmabareh@atbu.edu.ng [2] ; abasakaabubakar@gmail.com [3]

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the awareness and use of library public access catalogue by undergraduate students of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University (ATBU) Bauchi. The study employed descriptive survey research design with population of 200 undergraduate students which cut across all faculties in ATBU Bauchi using random sampling techniques. Data was collected by use of 200 questionnaires out of which 187 copies of questionnaire were retrieved and used for the study. Data were analyzed using frequency distributions and percentages. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the undergraduate students lacked the awareness of publicaccess catalogue in ATBU Library; undergraduate students never used the library public access catalogue in exploiting the resources in the university library; shelf-to-shelf browsing is the information searching and retrieval skills adopted by the undergraduate students. Lack of proper orientation and user education were identified as major factors militating against their maximum utilization and exploitation of the resources in the university library. Based on the findings, this paper proffers solutions how to reverse these trends through a modified technology of online public access catalogue for maximum utilization of library catalogue in retrieving the information resources in the library.

Keywords: Library catalogue, Public access, Awareness and Utilization

INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries have attempted to provide maximum access to their collections through the public accesscatalogue. Library catalogue is a systematic register of all bibliographic items found in a library or group of libraries. It is a physical listing of all the content of a library organized with a single card for each items in the library. It is a list or records of the content or a group of libraries. Catalogue cards direct users to materials, indicates the location of information resources and assist users with information retrieval skills. Public access catalogue card is the traditional access to resources of libraries in

general and academic library in particular. Library catalogue serves a useful purpose for more than 100yrs making resources easy to find within the walls of the physical library. For a long time catalogue cards have not been printed, in fact good hand writing used to be a key skill for librarians. The users of libraries sometimes assume that the staff who serves them should be able to recall immediately whether a particular book, recording or magazine is in the library collection. Because librarians cannot in reality remember the authors, titles and subjects of all the materials in their custody, hence they create lists of their materials in form of catalogue cards for all their collections. The process of preparing such list is called cataloguing. Catalogue cards describe the item or collections using standard formats. Library catalogue is an inventory of all items found within the library either physical or electronically. A More formal and professional approach in the use of library catalogue is the major tool through which bibliographic records are identified, accessed and retrieved by library users. Librarians and information professionals perform this credibleroleby providing optimum services to their clients; such services include selection, acquisition and distribution of information resources. Aguolu (2003) points out that library catalogue make the library an organized place in the university.For users to make effective use of library resources, the locations of these resources should be clearly defined through the library catalogue of any kind. Traditionally, library public catalogue is concerned with searching and retrieval of bibliographic records of information resources, instead of full text of the content of information resources. Library catalogue cards has made searching and retrieval of bibliographic records of materials easier and faster. Information searchers can access library resources by using various access points such as author, title, series, subject, illustrators, and key words in title, edition, ISBN, illustrators, ISSN, and sometimes the titles of contents. Atinmo (2007) observed that "prior to the evolution of the internet; the cataloguer organized the library collection through description and subject cataloguing of resources using standard tools which had been developed over many years. These tools were the Anglo American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2), the international standard bibliographic Description (ISBD), Sears List of Subject Headings, and the Library of Congress List of Subject (LCSH)".

Catalogue card contains descriptive information resources of the library holdings, it is prepared using the ''3 x 5'' inch card. The information on this card gives the library users access of materials on the shelves; the cards are arranged using the call numbers or Authors' name for easy access and retrieval. However, most library users find it difficult to retrieve information resources needed by going straight to the shelves for searching without consulting the library public access catalogue there by finding it difficult to access the information resources required. The catalogue inform users of the library on what a library has being in the traditional library or virtual library. This card catalogues has some advantages such as flexibility, and currency, ease to use, availability, and relatively cheap, while the disadvantages are size, human error, ease of use, flexible and currency . The catalogue cards are still very useful for users of the libraries and in particular for those of us that are living in the developing countries where libraries are underfunded Taylor &Joudrey (2009)

Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study were as follows:

  ➢ To examine the undergraduate student's awareness of the public access catalogue in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University library.

  ➢ Ascertain the frequency of use of the library public access catalogue by students of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi;

  ➢ identify student's searching skills and retrieval of information resources in the library; and

  ➢ Identify factors responsible for under-utilization of the public access catalogue by undergraduate students in the university library.

Statement of problem

 Library public access catalogue provides guide to users in locating the information resources needed with ease. In spite the relevancy of the library catalogue in providing easy access to information

resources within the library, for over a period of time public access catalogue are under-utilized in present day academic libraries particularly in ATBU library. What could be the cause for underutilization of the library public access catalogue cards to search for the information resources needed by the undergraduate students? What is the level of undergraduate student's awareness of the public access catalogue cards in the university library? These questions propelled the rationale for conducting this study.

Literature review

Awareness is the knowledge about something that exist or understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience. It can also be seen as knowledge or perception of a situation, fact, consciousness, recognition. Realization, grasp and acknowledgement concern about and well-informed interest or familiarity in a particular situation or development. Catalogue cards have being the longest catalogue in use in most university libraries across the globe. Luwehabura (2009) opines that it has been long time since most libraries filled with cards catalogue drawers of paper cards with information about books. The library catalog might be compared to the index for a book. The index provides the reader with a way to find information in the book without having to read every page. The index tells the reader the page on which the information about a specific subject can be found. The library catalog does the same thing. It tells the library user exactly where materials meeting their specific needs can be found; with the call number of the book corresponding to the page number in an index. According to Reitz (2004)card catalogue as a list of the holding of a library, printed, typed or hand written on catalogue cards with each representing a single bibliographic item in the collection. In the same vein, Chan Lois Mai (2007)opines that Library catalogue originated as manual. Library catalogue is a register of all bibliographic items found in a library or a group of libraries script list, arranged by format or in a rough alphabetical arrangement by author, subject or title entry. It enables users to access the contents of a library, users can use them to clarify how to find an entry and how to interpreter the data in an entry. Yusuf and Iwu (2010) expressed that library public access catalogue is a bibliography of a library collection that is available to the public. Libraries house a wide variety of materials on many different topics and in many different formats requires adequate retrieval tools for easy access. This is whyAtinmo (2007) confirmed that library catalogue is the major tool through which bibliographic records are identified, access, and retrieved in the library.

However, the information contained in the catalogue cards provides many access points needed to assist the patron seeking for information in the library. Users search a library catalogue principally to locate books and other materials available in a library. In the words of Unagha (2010)sees library public catalogue as an access point without which retrieval may be hampered and jeopardized. Users looking for a wide range of literature on a particular subject can search through the library catalogue. Library catalogue card indicates the subject or theme of the work; it identifies the location of the document on the shelves or stack. The benefits of catalogue are to facilitate the location of a particular publication and to relate and display together the editions which the library has of a given work and the works which it has of a given author. When library materials are cataloged, access is provided for the library patrons a given topic, by a particular author, or in a particular format, that the library possesses. The better the use of library public catalogue, the more use the library collections, and the more satisfied the patron is in his or her search for information in the library. This is confirmed by Joachim, Martins (2003)that catalogue is the major tool through which information resources are identified, accessed, retrieved and utilized. Cutter (n.d)reinforced that catalogue should not only function as a list of books but exist as a "library unit" by showing what the library has under a given author, However, a more comprehensive benefits of public access catalogue was put forward by Charles Ammi Cutter made first explicit statement regarding the objectives of a bibliographic system in his rule for printed dictionary catalogue as follows.

   a. Identifying objectives: To enable a person to locate abook of which either Author, Title or Subject isknown.

   b. Collocating objectives: To show what the library has by given author, by given subject and in a kind of literature.

   c. Evaluating objectives: To assist in the choice of a book.

However, the library catalogue goal was revived in 1998 which defines four users task: find, identify, select and obtain**.** Librarians are not only custodians of collections but they have to make information accessible to users.Nwalo(2006) states that paraprofessionals in libraries can now effectively perform much of the duties that hitherto

were the exclusive preserve of professionals**.**Unomah (1986) in OlajideAbiodun and Yusuf,K.F (2009)opined that ,majority of students do not use the library resources due to various reasons, which include students using browsing approach for searching information in the library. His study showed that about 69% of the respondents indicated that, they approach the library resources by going straight to the shelves without checking the public catalogues. In the same vein,Oyesiku (2004)observed that, over a quarter of the users visit the library to read for examination without consulting library materials. This is because majority of the users do not know the proper methods of retrieving materials in the library using the public access catalogue. The study further revealed that, 84.3% of users got their information resources through trial and error. This is related to the opinion of Mabawonku (2004)who reported that many library patrons were forced to call on librarians for help. In a study by Okello-Obura (2010) revealed that for students to utilize the growing range of information resources they must acquire and practice the skills necessary to exploit them. In the same vein, a study by Rubina Bhatti (2009)on International students, especially those who learned English as a second language .often struggle to use the library more than their American counterparts. Although the population of international students is on the rise, research on international students ability to search library resources is limited, Pervious studies have indicated that there is significant differences between the library skills of international students and those of us students. This exploratory study examined the ability of undergraduates and graduates international students to identify books and journal articles, compare it to a small control group of US students. This study, though limited in number and scope, revealed that international students use the library more frequently but may still need library instruction on the basics of library skills such as finding a book on the shelf.

On the contrary, Coyle &Hillmann (2007) observed that online public access had radically changed the way users' access the catalogue cards. In the same vein, a study by Youngok (2006)argued that "The trend worldwide has proved that information provision and delivery had shifted from the traditional models to electronic and web-based formats. Traditional collections are giving way to if not total but at least hybrid collections. This change in structure is not without its attendant challenges as electronic and digital libraries come along with their peculiar characteristics despite sharing the same purpose of preserving, organizing and distributing information resources as in the case of traditional libraries". Ansari (2008)study shows that not many users are aware of the expertise needed for searching OPAC system. This confirmed by Yusuf and Iwu (2010)expressed that, 61.9% of students use OPAC to access library materials. They attribute this positive development as a result of compulsory orientation programs organized by the library for the first year students of Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria. Although the study shows that only 10.0% of faculty respondents use the online public access cataloging (OPAC) This may be as a result of lack of awareness of OPAC service or skill on how to use it. On the contrary, Nkechi (2015) revealed from her study that no university in the south-east has OPAC, yet their cards catalogues are in a mess. The card catalogues are in deplorable condition in Nigeria university libraries since internet came in to existence in Nigeria. In a related development, Mulla and Chandrashekara (2009)investigates the reasons why users were not using the library OPAC services. Their findings showed that, 91.06% complained of the shortage of system terminals put in place by the library; 55.69% attributed it to lack of awareness of the OPAC services; while 52.03% linked it to the improper working of OPAC module; 20.33% stated that the system is far from stack area; while 15.85% attributed it to lack of orientation from library staff and 10.98% stated that they cannot locate the books they need through the OPAC. These are genuine reasons that university libraries must seek to address so as to maintain its status as information providers and meet the information needs of library users. The card catalogue is a familiar sight to library users for generations, but it has been effectively replaced by the online public access catalogue OPAC.Oketunji (2007) reported that "in many library schools, cataloguing courses are essentially traditional and do not cover new trends and issues in the organization of knowledge and information". He also discovered that graduates of the library schools surveyed lacked required skills for various cataloguing positions in libraries, especially in an electronic or automated environment.

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey design was used for this study. A simple random sampling technique was used to sample 200 respondents from the target population of registered undergraduate students of ATBU university library. Data was collected through the instrument of questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed using frequency distributions and percentages.

DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

Out of the 200 questionnaires distributed to the respondents in ATBU university library 187 (93.5%) copies were duly completed, returned and found valid for analysis.

In order to examine undergraduate students awareness of the available public access catalogue in the library under study. The results are as presented in the table 1 below.

Table I: Users' Awareness of public access catalogue in ATBU Bauchi

Awareness of Public Catalogue	Frequency	Percentage
Aware	50	26.7
Not aware	120	64.1
Undecided	17	9
Total	**187**	**100**

The above table I revealed that, 50 (26.7%) respondents were aware of the use of public access catalogue; 120 (64.1%) were not aware of public access catalogue; while 17(9%) were undecided.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent of using library public access catalogue cards the results are indicated in table 2.

Table II: Respondents extents of using library public access catalogue

Frequency of use of Public access catalogue	Frequency	Percentage
Frequently used	7	3.7%
Infrequently used	8	4.2%
Not used at all	170	90.1%
Undecided	2	01%
Total	**187**	**100**

From the above table II, only 7(3.7%) of the respondents frequently used the library public access catalogue for retrieval of information resources. 8(4.2%) respondents do not frequently use public access catalogue; surprisingly majority 170 (90.1%) never used public access catalogue at all; while 2(1%) were undecided.

Respondents were asked to indicate the skills used in searching and retrieving information resources from the open shelves. The results are expressed in the below table 3.

Table III: Respondents information searching skills.

Information searching skills adopted	Frequency	Percentage
Shelve to shelve browsing.	137	73%
Assistance from library staff	25	13.7%
Assistance from friends	15	8.0%
Library catalogue	10	5.3%
Total	**187**	**100**

Data in table III, revealed that, majority of the respondents 137 (73%) adopted shelve to shelve browsing searching skills approach. While 25 (13.6%) searched for information by seeking assistance from library staff. 15(8.0%) sought assistance from friends; only 10 (5.3%) utilized the public access catalogue.

Table 1V shows the various factors militating against the use of public access catalogue.

Table IV: Factors militating against the use of library public access catalogue

Factors hindering the use of catalogue.	Frequency	Percentage
Non-inclusion in GENs syllabus	45	24%
Lack of library guide/ handbook for new & old students	10	5 %
Lack of proper orientation on the use of library public catalogue	52	28 %
Lack of user education program	50	27%
Lack of knowledge on how to use the library public catalogue	30	16%
TOTAL	**187**	**100%**

Data in table IV above reveals that, 45 (24%) attributed lack of inclusion in GENs syllabus; only 10 (5%) adduced it to lack of availability of library guide/handbook as a militating factor. 52 (28%) described lack of proper orientation on the use of library public access catalogue as another factor; 50 (27%). This was closely followed by lack of user education programme. The least factor was lack of knowledge on how to use the library public catalogue with 30 (16%) responses.

Summary of findings

The summary of the findings of the study were as follows:

1. Majority of the undergraduate students lacked the awareness of publicaccess catalogue in ATBU Library.

2. Majority of the undergraduate students never used the publicaccess catalogue in exploring the resources in the university library.

3. Undergraduate students indicated using shelf-to-shelf browsing as their information searching skills in the library.

4. The respondents indicated lack of proper orientation and lack of user education as major factors militating against their maximum utilization and exploitation   of university library resources.

Conclusion

The findings of this study shows that the awareness and utilization of library public access catalogue in the library by under graduate students of Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University is very low because majority of the respondents infrequently used thepublic access catalogue and often resorted shelf-to-shelf approach for information searching and retrieval skills. Furthermore, it became obvious that most of the students in ATBU lacked adequate orientation on how to use the library public access catalogue cards which results into underutilization of library information resources in Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University library. The card catalogues are in deplorable condition in Nigeria university libraries since the invention of internet. However, In Nigeria, unlike the developed countries, most libraries adopt the old fashioned cards catalogue which is reason for underutilization of public access catalogue cards as most of the 21st century students are technology naïve, they preferred the online public access card in retrieving the necessary information needed to support their learning and research activities. However, for African libraries, particularly, Nigerian libraries to gain equal footing in their sister institutions in the more developed countries. It is imperative that Nigerian students need to equip end-users with skills such as information literacy skills .information retrieval skills, computer technology skills among others as a strategy to promote awareness, access and usage of public access catalogue by undergraduate students in Nigerian universities. Particularly, ATBU undergraduate students. University libraries need to be information technology conscious if they really want to be relevant in the modern academic world. Many libraries in developed countries have converted catalogue cards into computer system; most libraries have transformed their card catalogue on computer system to promote information retrieval skills through use of online public access catalogue OPAC for high rate of utilization of the public access catalogue which determines the usage of the information resources in the library.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby advanced:

1. Undergraduate students should be aware of the benefits of using public library access catalogue in ATBU Library as an important information retrieval tool.

2. Undergraduate students should be encouraged to use the publicaccess catalogue in exploiting the resources in the university library.

3. Undergraduate students should be discouraged from using shelf-to-shelf browsing as their information searching skills in the library.

4. The respondents should be given proper orientation and user education as major factors for enhancing their maximum utilization and exploitation of university library resources.

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