

Use and Quality of Library Services: Implications on the Satisfaction of Students' Information Needs

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Abstract: *For any academic library to remain relevant to the changing information needs of its users, it has to do an assessment of the utilization of its services by its users and how such utilization satisfies information needs. Thus, this descriptive-correlational research was conducted to provide the academic library of a private university in Cagayan de Oro City with valuable information as to the quality of its services and collections as perceived by the college students. Specifically, this research determined the student users' assessment of the quality of library services, extent of use of the library collections, satisfaction of their information needs, and any significant association between the quality of library services and utilization and between utilization and satisfaction of information needs. Data were collected using validated and pilot-tested questionnaires, which responses were processed using descriptive and inferential statistics. As found in this research, the quality of library services was assessed to be very good and the library materials were used to a high extent, except for the non-print materials. Moreover, the student users' academic and non-academic information needs were satisfied. The tests of relationship revealed a significant association between the library's quality of services and utilization and between the student users' satisfaction of information needs and utilization of the library. Therefore, efforts to improve further the quality of library services should be instituted to increase utilization and to achieve maximum satisfaction of the library users' information needs.*

Keywords: Library services, Information needs

INTRODUCTION

The library provides access to information in conjunction with the information needs of its users, primarily students. As a storehouse of knowledge, the library plays a vital role in the academic life of students. Many of students' academic tasks require them to

gather information from different sources to include books, magazines, journals, periodicals, and other reference materials. If provided by the library sufficient access to these information resources, students are aided in their academic tasks, which results in their academic success.

Other than the academic tasks associated with schooling, students have personal pursuits as well. These pursuits relate to their personal development and leisure associated with knowledge acquisition. Such acquisition of knowledge goes beyond the academic requirements. Knowledge is pursued for them to grow in aspects of personal life that is beyond the scope of formal education. Non-academic resources such as novels and reference materials for general information and appreciation and personal equipping provide help to meet such students' pursuits.

In relation to students' academic and personal pursuits, the library resources and the expertise of librarians are essential (Keith, 2004). The library provides students with services that meet their various needs and encourages them to read or use the library resources. These two important functions of the library must be carried out well to make certain that students' academic and non-academic information needs are fully satisfied. To do such, the library has to have adequate collections, highly skilled and competent librarians, and very conducive reading facility or infrastructure (Adomi, 2006). If these factors are evident in the library of the research locale, a private sectarian university, can be determined in different ways: internal evaluation by the key figures of the school in general and the library in particular or through user evaluation, which puts the quality of library services on perceptual assessment by its users. The latter way of assessing the library is the focus of this study.

While many previous studies assessed the quality of library services using the SERVQUAL as framework, this present study, however, puts the assessment in the context of the satisfaction of the users' academic and non-academic information needs. Hence, only those library services that directly relate to the facilitation of students' access to the use of information resources are assessed. Moreover, this study is the first of its kind in the research locale; hence, this has motivated the researcher, a librarian herself, to conduct the study, which findings are hoped to help the university library find ways of enhancing its services.

Some realities related to the utilization of the library resources by the students in the research locale further encouraged the researcher to pursue this study. One reality is the seemingly declining or steady rate of library student users for the past semesters. This reality undermines the huge investment of the school for library resources, especially for e-resources. Also, such reality seems to negate the library's efforts of promoting wide use of the library resources among students. Another reality observed by the researcher is the absence of students' feedback about the library's quality of services. Without such feedback, especially on their satisfaction with the library services and their information needs, the library will not have any hard basis for its decision making

on the improvement of its services. The lack of such feedback all the more necessitates the conduct of this study.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study takes the theory of Ranganathan (1931) expressed in the “Five Laws of Library Science” as its main theoretical underpinning. The theory, which has continued to directly impact library services, emphasizes that the library exists to be utilized and that the user is the core of library service. These laws have several implications on library use vis-à-vis satisfaction of users’ information needs, both academic and non-academic, which in this study is correlated to extent of library use and quality of library services.

The first law is “Books are for use.” This law makes it important the use of the acquired library collections by the clients important. The libraries collect books not for storage but for clients to access and use (Bhatt, 2011). It is, therefore, imperative that the libraries ensure easy access of these collections through any means such as electronic cataloging, accessible location of the library to increase patronage, digitalization, effective signage, increase number of opening hours, among others. It is along this law that the library’s provision of facilitative reading environment comes in.

The second law states “Every reader his/her book.” This law implies that readers have different interests and needs and that there are materials in the library that satisfy their interests and needs. It is then the role of the library to help its student users find the kind of information they need, be it academic or non-academic. The library must ensure users’ full access to its resources. Ways to help the users find the information they need include providing them the necessary librarians’ skilled assistance and rich reading materials, which in this study will be assessed. This law also reminds the librarians to understand the needs of the student users so that they can match their needs with the library’s collections or resources. That is, the library must develop its collection according to the requirements of the student users, be they present or future requirements. That way, the library can always remain relevant to the ever-changing needs of the users.

The third law has it that “Every book its reader.” This law advances the right of the users to easy access to the library resources, and a way to accomplish such is through “putting people together with what they require” (Ranganathan in Bhatt, 2011). The third law suggests for the librarians to really promote library resources to their users, who may not be aware of the resources available for them and who may not know how to find them. Being so, there is a need for the library to carry out activities that they make known to the student users what the library holds for them. In this study, these activities are termed as information campaign activities of the library. Examples of these promotional activities include library promotional video, library website, library

facebook, library events. These activities allow the library to market effectively its products and services to the users.

The fourth law says, “Save the time of the reader.” This law emphasizes how important time is to every library user. Hence, librarians must help library users save their time finding the information they need. To do so, the library has to devise, design, and develop methods and systems of organizing and disseminating information for efficient and effective service that best saves the time of the library users. As Bhatt puts it, “the main objective of the library should be that the user who enters in a library for a specific purpose should not leave empty handed. At the same time, it must also be ensured that the user’s valuable time is not wasted in searching for material.” Such can be achieved by providing the users with skilled assistance of the librarians and creating facilitative reading environment. The use of ICT in the academic libraries is a move that significantly saves the readers’ time searching for the materials they need. To consolidate and repackage information into an appropriate form, to make information available when needed, and to ensure high quality of services and offerings are library tasks that consider the benefits and preferences of the library users (Mahajan and Chakravarty, 2007).

The fifth law is that “The library is a growing organism.” Such law implies that libraries will keep growing even in the digital age and world. That is, libraries will remain relevant by adapting their products and services to the digital world. The presence of e-resources and computer in many libraries reflects the libraries’ flexibility and adaptability (Singh and Krishan, 2005). Moreover, along the growth in library services is the growth of the librarians in terms of knowledge and skills needed in the delivery of these services. Such growth in knowledge and skills is very important to the librarians so that they can provide the users with the necessary skilled assistance. As a growing organism, libraries must keep up with the latest technological development, such is the gist of the fifth law. This law calls for the library’s provision of wide-array of reading materials that include the electronic form.

The library basically functions to meet its users’ information needs. This study also takes Belkin’s (in Abdullahi et al., 2015) concept of information needs, which is an anomalous state of knowledge or gap in the person’s knowledge in sense-making situations. Such gap motivates the person to seek information that may be richly available in the library. Furthermore, information need is often understood in the science as evolving from vague awareness of something missing and as culminating in locating information that contributes to understanding and meaning (Kuthlthan, 1993). According to Wilson (1997), there must be an attendant motive when a person experiences information needs. This attendant motive is what prompt the person involved to take necessary steps to locate and identify resources required to meet his/her need when it arises.

In this study, students' information needs are classified as academic and non-academic. Ajiboye and Tella (2007) pointed out that students' search for academic information is very crucial to the overall performance of the students. In the study of Oladokun and Aina (2009), it was found out that the major areas of information needs of the undergraduate students were related to course of study, job opportunities, career development, and further education. These areas are generally academic in nature. Moreover, in a study carried out by Miriam Kakai, Ikoja–Odongo, and I.M.N Kigongo–Bukonya (2004), it was found out that the main information demands that led undergraduate students into seeking for information include: course works and assignments, preparation for examinations and tests, general reading to enhance lecture notes, and class–group discussions. Findings of their study also revealed that the students relied on library books, textbooks, and journals. Also, the Internet is the most consulted source. Students look for the fastest way that would lead to satisfactory results when doing research by going for electronic information sources first.

The foregoing discussions formed the conceptualization of the study, which schema is shown in Figure 1. The quality of library services and the extent of use of the library are the independent variables correlated to the satisfaction of the users' information needs, which is the dependent variable. The quality of library services is assessed in terms of the areas that are directly associated with the satisfaction of users' information needs. These areas are librarians' provision of skilled assistance, library's provision of reading materials, library's provision of facilitative environment for reading, and library's provision of information campaign activities. On the other hand, the users' information needs are classified into academic and non-academic, the former pertaining to the information that meet course-related tasks such as research and assignment and test preparation while the latter pertaining to information at a too personal level such as entertainment and general awareness. Use of the library as a construct is determined by the frequency the different library resources (academic and non-academic) are accessed by the student users to meet their information needs.

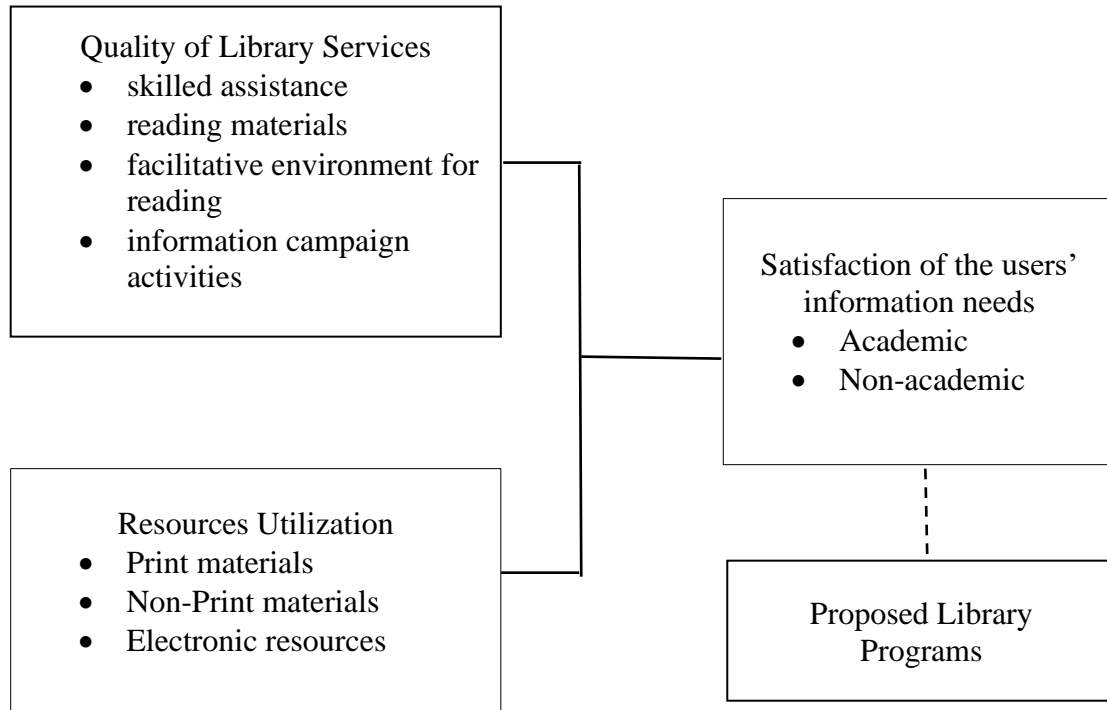


Figure 1 –Schematic Diagram of the interplay of the variables of the study

Objective of the Study

This study determined the satisfaction of the information needs of the students in a private sectarian university in Cagayan de Oro City in relation to the library services and their utilization.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the descriptive-correlational research design to analyze and interpret the collected data regarding the variables of the study. Best and Khan (2006) defined descriptive design as a research design that attempts to find generalizable attributes that dealt with present conditions. Such research design was deemed appropriate because this study described the phenomenon of interest, which was the satisfaction of the participants' information needs (academic and non-academic) and its relation to the participants' use of the library resources and the quality of the library services.

The participants of the study were the actual college student users of the academic library of a sectarian, private higher education institution in Cagayan de Oro City. Non-probability sampling was employed; that is, only those students, regardless of their course and year level, who used the library during the data gathering period, which ran for the entire week, were asked to participate in the study. In particular, quota sampling was used. The study set the sampling size to 500 at the minimum. At the end of the data gathering period, the study obtained the participation of 562 students.

This study used descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) for problems 1, 2, and 3. Inferential statistics (linear regression analysis) was used for problems 4 and 5, which sought to determine the correlations of variables with multiple dimensions.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Table 1 shows the results of the test of correlation between the assessed quality of library services and the participants' satisfaction of their information needs.

Table 1. Correlation Results between the Students' Assessment of the Quality of Library Services and the Satisfaction of their Information Needs

Research Needs	Measures	Skilled Assistance	Reading Materials	Reading Environment	Information Campaign	Library Services
Academic	Correlation Coefficient	.542**	.574**	.533**	.515**	.624**
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Non-Academic	Correlation Coefficient	.504**	.521**	.527**	.486**	.586**
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
Overall Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	.570**	.598**	.586**	.547**	.662**
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

As can be seen in the table, when all the types of information need and the quality of all the areas of the library services were correlated, the test yielded correlation coefficient values significant at the alpha value; hence, there are statistical evidences to reject the null hypothesis. That is, there was a significant association between the quality of library services and the satisfaction of the participants' information needs – be it academic or non-academic. The positive correlation implies that the better is the library's provision of skilled assistance, reading materials, facilitative reading environment, and information campaign activities, the more the information needs of the library users are satisfied.

Table 2 shows the results of the test of correlation between the participants' extent of library use (utilization of library resources) and the satisfaction of their information needs both academic and non-academic.

Table 2. Correlation Results between the Students' Extent of Library Use and the Satisfaction of their Information Needs

Satisfaction of Research Needs	Measures	Print	Non Print	Electronic Resources	Utilization of Library Resources
Academic	Correlation Coefficient	.441**	.184**	.405**	.374**
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000
Non-Academic	Correlation Coefficient	.405**	.187**	.401**	.362**
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000
Overall Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	.458**	.199**	.427**	.395**
	Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000

As shown in the table, all correlation coefficient values are significant at the alpha value, hence the rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, the participants' utilization of the library resources was significantly associated with the satisfaction of their information needs. That is, the more their information needs are satisfied, the more they use the library resources. As earlier established in this study, the participants used the library resources to a great extent and they reported having their information needs satisfied.

The above findings indicate that the library has provided its users with rich and relevant library resources that match the information needs of the users and that the library has made its users aware of its collections, thus the high extent of utilization of library resources particularly the print and electronic resources. Moreover, the significant correlations underscore the importance of continuously improving the services of the library along the different areas to meet the changing information needs and information resource preferences of students coming from different courses and levels. Improved quality of library services will sustain students' interest in using the library and will attract more students to visit and access the information resources of the library. As one study (Jacalan, 2013) revealed, the underutilization of the library resources was associated with poorly perceived quality of library services. Conversely, if the students perceive the library to offer adequately what they need in their search for information, they will highly be motivated to use the library resources. Also, if they perceive the librarians to be very cordial and helpful to students, all the more they will use the library for their research work.

DISCUSSION

This descriptive-correlational study determined if the student participants' assessment of the quality of library services and utilization of the library resources are significantly associated with the satisfaction of their information needs. Specifically, the following

were determined in the study: (1) the participants' assessment of the quality of library services in terms of the provision of skilled assistance, reading materials, facilitative reading environment, and information campaign activities; (2) the participants' extent of use of the library resources; (3) the participants' satisfaction of their information needs; (4) any significant association between the participants' assessment of the quality of library services and the satisfaction of their information needs; and (5) any significant association between the participants' extent of use of the library resources and the satisfaction of their information needs.

The participants of the study were the college students of a private university actually using the library resources during the data gathering period that ran for one week. Data were obtained using validated and pilot-tested questionnaires. Both descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential (Multiple Linear Regression) statistics were used to analyze and interpret the data.

Summary of the Findings

The salient findings of the study are as follows:

1. The student participants rated very good the quality of the library services vis-à-vis provision of skilled assistance, provision of reading materials, provision of facilitative reading environment, and provision of information campaign activities.
2. The student participants used the library resources to a great extent with electronic materials used the most while the non-print materials used the least.
3. The student participants' information needs, both academic and non-academic, were satisfied. Among the academic information needs, research got the highest satisfaction mean score. Among the non-academic information needs, personal advancement got the highest satisfaction mean score.
4. The quality of the library services across all areas was significantly associated with the student participants' satisfaction of their academic and non-academic information needs.
5. The student participants' extent of use of the library resources was significantly associated with the satisfaction of their academic and non-academic information needs.

CONCLUSION

As found in this study, the student participants' academic and non-academic information needs were satisfied. This finding implies that the library has provided its student users with adequate collection of information resources for every discipline and that these resources – print, non-print, and electronic – are relevant to the information needs of the student users. It can then be said that the library has carried out one of its responsibilities to its clients as outlined in the laws of library science advanced by Ranganathan – remaining responsive to the changing information needs of the library users.

Moreover, the information needs of the student participants were satisfied not only because of the adequate provision of information resources but also because of the quality provision of skilled assistance, facilitative reading environment, and information campaign activities. Again, with reference to the Ranganathan's five laws of library science, the library has done its role as information provider that has in store reading materials made easily accessible for use to students, that has a well-trained staff assisting students in their search for information, that has a clear and effective system of updating its collections to make them relevant to students' information needs, and that has in place a program that raises awareness of students on its services and collections.

On the final note, findings of this study point to the positive link library utilization and quality of library services have to the satisfaction of students' information needs. Therefore, it is imperative that academic libraries remain dynamic in this age of information.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings and conclusion of the study become the bases upon which the following recommendations are drawn:

1. To the Library. That it may heighten its efforts in keeping its services and collections of quality in order to ensure full satisfaction of students' academic and non-academic information needs; that it further promote the academic usefulness of non-print materials, which is found in this study to be the least utilized by students; that it may further expand and upgrade its electronic resources, which are found to be the most utilized, to maximize service to students;
2. To Student Users. That they may maximize the use of the library resources to satisfy fully their academic and non-academic information needs; that they may find value of the non-print materials that the library has in store for them; and
3. To Future Researchers. That they may consider exploring other factors, aside from quality of library services and utilization thereof, causing the use or disuse of the library services, e.g. attitude towards research, perceptions about the library and the librarians, awareness of the library collections, experiences in the use of the library; that they may include the teaching personnel whose information needs that vary from that of students must also be met by the library.

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