

## **Availability and Use of Reference Services and Resources by Undergraduates in Nigeria Maritime University Library**

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### **Abstract**

*This study investigated the availability and use of reference resources and services by undergraduates in Nigeria Maritime University Library. The study adopted the descriptive survey design and 334 undergraduates were randomly sampled from a population of 2000. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that there are various reference resources available to users with dictionary being the most available and used by undergraduate, majority of undergraduates use reference resources for personal research, most undergraduates use map & atlas and glossary twice monthly and power supply as a major challenges encountered by undergraduates in assessing reference resources and services in Nigeria maritime university library. The library management should therefore organize library orientation for incoming students to acquaint themselves with the available references resource and services and how to use them effectively.*

**Keywords:** availability, reference resources, services, undergraduates, Nigeria Maritime University Library

### **Introduction**

The availability of reference services and resources in the library means the provision of reference services and resources in the library this is to say that reference resources are present accessibility to library patrons. The availability of reference services and resource is one of the most important role played by the reference section of the library by means of information dissemination to

students, lecturers, non academic staff and other members of the university community in order to meet the information needs of its patrons. Kumar (2003) in his study stated that reference services help to establish contact between a user and the right document, thereby saving the users time. Ifidon and Ifidon (2008) also defined reference service as direct personal assistance given by librarians to library patrons who are in pursuit of information for whatever reason. They further stated that reference services does not only involve directing the patron to the location of the material where the information can be found or identified and selection of materials related to a particular information need and the provision of a piece of brief factual information, but also locating what information is relevant from the bulk of reference resources that are available.

Reference resources are information materials in print and non-print format which are not meant to be read from cover to cover but to be consulted for a specific piece of information within the library. Ruteyan and Akporhonor (2007) in other study stated that reference resources are kept in the reference section of the library for reference purpose and not to be borrowed. The information contained in reference resources are usually useful in introducing a subject matter.

The more reference resources are made available in the library the more they will be used by patrons.

### **Statement of Problem**

The primary role of a university library is to support the academic programme of its parent institution. Notable among the role of a university is the dissemination of information to its patrons and the reference section of the library is at the centre of performing this duty. The reference section of the university library see to it that the information need of its patrons are met by means of availability and use of different resources in the library. Despite the availability of reference services and resources in the library, this section, however, has not experienced high patronage by undergraduates. Hence this study is set out to investigate the availability and use of reference services and resources in Nigeria Maritime University library.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The major objective of this study is to investigate the availability and use of reference services and resources in the Nigeria Maritime University library. The specific purposes are to:

- ascertain the types of reference resources that are available in the library.
- To investigate the purpose of use of the reference resources by students
- Determine the extent of use of reference section of the library and
- Investigate the challenges students encounter with the use of reference services and resources of the library.

## **Review of Related Literature**

The basic of establishing a university library is to support learning, teaching and research work of its parent institution. It is the duty of the university library to make available information resources to both students and lecturers which are found relevant for learning and teaching. According to Ogbuiyi (2015), the reference department is one of the most important departments in the library that provides free flow of information through the provision of reference services. Therefore, the reference section of the university library provides answers to the various questions asked by the library users in a timely manner. The resources in this section includes dictionaries, encyclopedias, handbooks, compendium, atlas and maps, glossary, manual, directories, reports, and so on. These materials are not meant to be read from cover to cover rather are consulted for a specific piece of information and can only be used within the library. Oyedum (2005) defined reference resources as books designed by the arrangement and treatment of its subject matter to be consulted for definite items of information rather to be used consecutively. Reference resource therefore, are information bearing materials in the library which guide users to the introductory background and facts on a particular subject matter. Ogbuiyi (2015) in a study investigated the availability and use of reference sources and service in a university library in Nigeria. The study shows that most reference sources in the library are highly available, highly adequate and very accessible. The study further reveals that user waste a lot of time when searching for reference materials, the reference libraries are not user friendly and there should be effective orientation to guide users on how to use reference resource.

Sohail Pandye and Upadhyay (2012) conducted a study on the use of library resources in university library using the University of Kalyani as a case study. Questionnaire was used to collect data from 70 students which were randomly selected from its 4 faculties of the university. The study revealed that majority of users visit the library daily. The study also revealed lesser use of reference materials (30%) while 78.33% visit the library to study.

Akpe, Ajav and Gbashinma (2018) investigated the availability and utilization of information resources by students of Akawe Torkula College of Advanced and Professional Studies (ATCAPS) Makurdi Benue State, Nigeria revealed that the types of information resources available for students are inadequate, that students information resources for different purposes such as preparing for examination, that the satisfaction of students from the use of information resources are very low and students encounter a lot of problems in using information resources in ATCAPS library. Their study further revealed that there are strategies that can be adopted to overcome the challenges of utilizing information resources at ATCAPS in Makurdi.

Ishola and Obadare (2014) carried out a study on availability, access to and level of use of academic library information resources of selected academic libraries in South-western Nigeria. The result of the findings shows that there was high level of availability of information resources and users education programme of modern ICT equipment to ensure adequate understanding of library activities by users.

Razaa and Olayeye (2017) in a survey on availability and use of reference resources and services to the Federal Polytechnic offer students in Kwara, Nigeria found that reference resources in the library are highly available, adequate, students use reference sources more for project work and for class assignment. The study further reveal that poor power supply and old and irrelevant reference sources for their courses are the major challenges facing the students in the use of reference sources and services in the library.

The investigation of Onifade and Sowole (2011) revealed that most students were not aware of the reference services being offered in the library.

## **Methodology**

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study four hundred undergraduates of the

Nigeria Maritime University was randomly sampled from a population of two thousand undergraduate. The instrument for data collection will be a self-structured questionnaire. The data collected is analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean and standard deviation.

## Result analysis

The types of reference resources that are available to undergraduate users in the Nigeria Maritime University library was defined by 10 components with a scale of 2 items (Available = 1, Not available = 2). Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the collected data and is presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Reference resources used by respondents

S/N	Reference resources	Available	%	Not Available	%	Mean	S.D
1	Dictionaries	302	90.4	32	9.6	1.10	.295
2	Year book	207	62.0	127	38.0	1.38	.486
3	Handbooks	239	71.6	95	28.4	1.28	.452
4	Encyclopedia	188	56.3	146	43.7	1.44	.497
5	Maps & atlases	185	55.4	149	44.6	1.45	.498
6	Glossary	167	50.0	167	50.0	1.50	.501
7	Manual	204	61.1	130	38.9	1.39	.488
8	Report	194	58.1	140	41.9	1.42	.494
9	Compendium	160	47.9	174	52.1	1.52	.500
10	Directories	179	53.6	155	46.4	1.46	.499

Source: Field Survey 2023

The research finding in Table 2 established that there are various reference resources available to users at the Nigeria Maritime University library, such as Dictionaries, Year book, Handbooks, Encyclopedia, Maps & atlases among others. The finding however revealed that Dictionaries ( $\bar{x}$ = 1.10) were the most available and used by the respondents. This was closely followed by Handbooks ( $\bar{x}$ = 1.28) and Yearbooks ( $\bar{x}$ = 1.38), while the least reference resource used by respondents is the Compendium ( $\bar{x}$ = 1.52).

## Purpose of reference resources use by students

The purposes for which undergraduates utilized reference resources at the Nigeria Maritime University library was defined by 6 components measured with a scale of 2 scale items ( Agree =1, Disagree =2). Descriptive statistics was used to calculate the data collected and the results are

presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Purpose of reference resources use by students

S/N	Purpose of reference resources use	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1	Personal research	262	78.4	72	21.6
2	Seminar preparation	178	53.3	156	46.7
3	Examination purpose	241	72.2	93	27.8
4	Self-development	225	67.4	109	32.6
5	Assignment	232	69.5	102	30.5
6	Leisure and relaxation	177	53.0	157	47.0

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 3 above revealed that the majority of the respondents 262 (78.4%) claimed that the purpose for the use of reference resources was for personal research, followed by 241 (72.2%) respondents who submitted that they use reference resources for examination purpose, and 232 (69.5%) respondents claimed they used the reference resources for assignment, while the least use of reference resources is leisure and relaxation which account for 177 (53.0%).

### The extent of use of reference section of the library

The extent of use of reference section of the library by undergraduates at the Nigeria Maritime University was defined by 10 components measured with a 5 scale items (Daily =1, Weekly =2, Twice monthly = 3, Monthly = 4, Never = 5). Descriptive statistics was used to calculate the data collected and the results are presented in Table 4 below

Table 4: Extent of use of reference section of the library

S/N	Reference resources	Daily (%)	Weekly (%)	Twice monthly (%)	Monthly (%)	Never (%)
1	Dictionaries	91 (27.2)	84 (25.1)	108 (32.3)	47 (14.1)	4 (1.2)
2	Year book	39 (11.7)	54 (16.2)	194 (58.1)	39 (11.7)	8 (2.4)
3	Handbooks	57 (17.1)	71 (21.3)	150 (44.9)	45 (13.5)	11 (3.3)
4	Encyclopedia	37 (11.1)	49 (14.7)	190 (56.9)	46 (13.8)	12 (3.6)
5	Maps & atlases	34 (10.2)	43 (12.9)	207 (62.0)	40 (12.0)	10 (3.0)
6	Glossary	35 (10.5)	38 (11.4)	207 (62.0)	44 (13.2)	10 (3.0)
7	Manual	39 (11.7)	56 (16.8)	179 (53.6)	51 (15.3)	9 (2.7)
8	Report	37 (11.1)	49 (14.7)	189 (56.6)	39 (11.7)	20 (6.0)
9	Compendium	29 (8.7)	41 (12.3)	49 (14.7)	29 (8.7)	186 (55.7)
10	Directories	49 (14.7)	50 (15.0)	37 (11.1)	33 (9.9)	165 (49.4)

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 4 above revealed that the majority of the respondents 207 (62.0%) and 207 (62.0%) claimed twice monthly usage of Maps & atlas and Glossary equally. This is followed by 194 (58.1%) and 190 (56.9%) of respondents who submitted to twice monthly use of Year book and Encyclopedia respectively. However, 186 (55.7%) and 165 (49.4%) respondents submitted that they never use Compendium and Directories respectively.

### **Challenges students encounter with the use of reference services and resources of the library**

The challenges encounters with the use of reference services of the library by undergraduates at the Nigeria Maritime University was defined by 9 components measured with a 3 scale items (Agree =1, Disagree =2, Undecided = 3). Descriptive statistics was used to calculate the data collected and the results are presented in Table 5 below:

Table 5: Challenges encountered with the use of library reference services

S/N	Reference resources	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)	Undecided (%)
1	Poor power supply	269 (80.5)	28 (8.4)	37 (11.1)
2	I do not know how to use reference resources	160 (47.9)	148 (44.3)	26 (7.8)
3	The reference librarian is not user friendly	104 (31.1)	184 (55.1)	46 (13.8)
4	The reference section is not convenient and conducive for reading	112 (33.5)	174 (52.1)	48 (14.4)
5	There are no relevant sources for my course	141 (42.2)	151 (45.2)	42 (12.6)
6	Unavailability of reference resources	145 (43.4)	149 (44.6)	40 (12.0)
7	No reference staff to assist me	185 (55.4)	116 (34.7)	33 (9.9)
8	I don't have to waste time on searching for reference sources	133 (39.8)	159 (47.6)	42 (12.6)
9	I do not know the reference services and resources that available in the library	181 (54.2)	119 (35.6)	34 (10.2)

Source: Field Survey 2023

Table 5 above revealed that the majority of the respondents 269 (80.5%) agree that poor power supply is a challenge encountered in accessing reference resources in the library. This is followed by 185 (55.4%) of respondents who submitted that there were no reference staff to assist them, while 184 (55.1%) of respondents disagreed with the notion the reference librarian is not user friendly but 181 (54.2%) of respondents claimed that they do not know the reference services and

resources that are available in the library.

### **Discussion of the findings**

The result of this study confirmed the availability of most reference resources at the Nigeria Maritime University library. The result of this finding is in-line with those of Ishola & Olurotimi (2014) and Ilori & Owolabi (2020) who in their respective studies opined that reference services were mostly available library services rendered to undergraduate users. The findings was similar to Ilori & Owolabi (2020) who submitted that undergraduates purpose of use of library resources were mainly for research, assignments and examination. Yusuf & Iwu (2010) in their study of “Use of academic library: a case study of Covenant University, Nigeria” found out that majority of undergraduates use the library 2-3 times a months. This trend appears the same in the present study where majority of the undergraduates uses the reference resources twice monthly. Also, challenges encountered in accessing reference resources were found to be similar to those experienced in the use of library resources, Luqman & Chinu (2017).

### **Conclusion**

Primarily, this study revealed the available reference resources, purpose of use of reference resources, the extent of use of reference resources and the challenges encountered in accessing reference resources at the library by undergraduates at the Nigeria Maritime University

### **Recommendations**

- Create Well-Equipped Libraries: Invest in well-stocked and up-to-date campus libraries with a diverse collection of books, periodicals, and digital resources. Make sure the learning atmosphere is pleasant and favorable.
- Digital Access: Make reference materials and resources available in digital format. Make sure students have access to electronic books, academic databases, and online publications.
- Organize library orientation sessions for incoming students to acquaint them with available resources and how to use them effectively.
- Wi-Fi access: Ensure consistent Wi-Fi connection within library facilities so that students may conveniently access online resources.



- **Seminars on Research Skills:** Provide seminars on research skills, referencing, and citation to assist students in making the most of available resources.
- **Extend library operation hours,** particularly during test seasons, to suit diverse study patterns.
- **Implement interlibrary loan services** to provide students with access to resources not accessible in their institution's library.
- **Reference Librarians:** Hire reference librarians to help students with research questions and direct them to pertinent resources.
- **Encourage the Use of Open Access Resources:** To lower the cost burden on students, encourage the use of open access resources and open educational materials.
- **Conduct Outreach Programs:** Conduct outreach programs and awareness campaigns to encourage students to use reference materials and services, highlighting the relevance of these resources in their academic path.

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