Evaluating Access and Use of Information Resources by Postgraduate Students at Adventist University of Africa Library in Kenya

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Abstract

At Adventist University of Africa (AUA) library, observation and statistical reports depict a regressive pattern in the access and use of information resources. For example, in the year 2012, 400 students accessed information resources, while in 2013 the number dropped to 362. In 2014 the number further dropped to 304. The aim of this study was to evaluate access and use of information resources by post-graduate students at AUA library and to suggest ways in which access and use can be enhanced. The objectives of the study were: to identify the information resources in the library; establish how the information resources are accessed by the students; establish how the information resources are used; identify challenges post-graduate students face while accessing and using the information resources; and establish ways of enhancing access and use of the information resources. The study population was 473 postgraduate students with a sample study of 142. Stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used. Data collection methods included distribution of questionnaires. The major findings were that users need to be well equipped with information retrieval skills to access and use information resources effectively. The study also established challenges users faced and these included, lack of the necessary skills to access electronic resources, language barrier and lack of awareness of available information resources. The study recommended that measures should be put in place to ensure that the students use the information resources effectively, and that the resources should be regularly updated.

Keywords: Information resources, Access and use of information, University libraries, Adventist University of Africa, Academic institutions in Kenya.

1. Introduction and background of the study: This study was carried out at Adventist University of Africa which has its main campus in Nairobi, Kenya, with five other extension sites in Africa. The University has an academic library based at the main campus. The main objective of the library is to partner with the University in facilitating access to relevant, up-to-date and quality information resources and services.

Academic libraries, a category to which Adventist University of Africa belongs, are fundamental fountains of information and knowledge in institutions of higher learning. Abubakar (2011) reaffirms that, academic libraries are libraries attached to tertiary institutions. Makori (2009) says that academic libraries acquire, preserve, organize, distribute and manage information resources in relation to research, teaching, learning and community services of universities. Khan (2009) also believes that these libraries exist for the sake of users who are also promoters, and whose major interests are that the desired information materials should be readily made available when needed, and in the appropriate format. Singh and Rasul (2010) reaffirm that effective academic libraries are gateways to knowledge that facilitate access and use of information resources. I agree with the sentiments above that emphasize the role of academic libraries.

1.1. Information Needs of Postgraduate Students: An information need is a desire to locate and obtain information to satisfy a need that one is aware or unaware of. Wilson (1981) says that such needs may be related to educational activities, to research activities, to professional activities to recreation activities, to cultural activities or to personal development. Miranda & Tarapanoff (2008) also define information needs as a state or process started when one perceives that there is a gap between the information and knowledge available to solve a problem and the actual solution of the problem. The basic assumption behind the discussion of information needs is that people need information and that is why Faibisoff & Ely (n.d) emphasize that the question is not whether men need information for they do. Rather the issue is whether the information available to them is of the right kind, right quantity, acceptable accuracy, or of appropriate timeliness. Information needs can be fulfilled by accessing and using information in an academic library like Adventist University of Africa Library.

1.2. Postgraduate students in academic libraries: The main scholarly work of postgraduate students in academic libraries is carrying out research to be able to produce quality research output in order to contribute to the creation of knowledge. For academic librarians to provide relevant and quality resources to post-graduate students, they need to know their information needs. Fidzani (1998) says that information needs of post-graduate students depend on the discipline of the study and level. George(2006) states that for academic libraries to adequately address the changing needs of its students, they need to know more about the information that the students use and value and what influences their information searching, obtaining and use.

Anunobi, Chinwe and Okoye (2008) conclude that academic libraries are faced with managing hybrid information resources (analogue and digital) and are challenged to impart the necessary skills for accessing and using this resources.

2. Purpose of the study: The aim of the study was to evaluate access and use of information resources by postgraduate students at Adventist University of Africa Library and to suggest ways in which they can be enhanced.

3. Objectives of the Study:

The study was guided by the following objectives:

 (i)   Identify the information resources in the library.
 (ii) Establish how the information resources are accessed by the students.
(iii) Establish how the information resources are used.
(iv)   Identify the challenges students face while accessing and using the information resources.
 (v)   Propose ways on how access and use of the information resources can be enhanced.

4. Research Methodology: The study adopted a quantitative research approach. A survey research design were used to guide the study within a case study. The study population consisted of 473 postgraduate students, with a study sample of 142. Probability and non-probability sampling methods were used to select the study sample. The stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used. Data collection methods included distribution of questionnaires. The study was guided by David Elli's information seeking theory. Data was presented in tables and graphs, and analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

5. Discussion of Findings:

5.1. Demographic Information: The research findings reveal that majority of the postgraduate students studying at the Adventist University of Africa are Kenyans as represented by 40.4 %, 10.1 % are from Tanzania, 8.3 % are from Uganda, 7.3 % from Rwanda, 5.5 % from Malawi, another 5.5 % from South Sudan, 4.6 % from Congo, another 4.6 % from Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Malagasy had 2.8 % each. Majority of the students taking postgraduate courses at the university are from the East African Region.

5.2. Information Resources found in the Library: The first objective was to find out the information resources found at Adventist University of Africa library. The respondents were provided with a number of information resources that are likely to be found in an academic library and were required to tick the ones that are found in the library as presented on Table 1 From the research findings, majority of the respondents indicated that books form the highest percentage of resources found in the library as represented by 48.6 %, E-journals represent 12.8 % of the information resources in the library, 10.1 % of the resources in the library are research projects, 9.2 % are newspapers, 6.4 % are Journals, 4.6 % are theses and dissertations, another 4.6 % are conference proceedings and 3.7 % are government

publications. The results therefore reveal that most of the information resources that need to be found in an academic library are available in the library. The results also show that students are aware of the information resources that are in the library.

Table 1: Information Resources Found in the Library

Resources	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Books	53	48.6
E-journals	14	12.8
Research Projects	11	10.1
Newspapers	10	9.2
Journals	7	6.4
Theses and Dissertations	5	4.6
Conference proceedings	5	4.6
Government publications	4	3.7
Total	109	100.0

5.3. Rating of Information Resources: After indicating the various information resources that are available at the university library, the respondents were asked to rate these resources. They were provided with a scale of 1-5 where five represented excellent and one poor. The mean and standard deviation of the data was obtained and the results are presented on Table 2. Books were rated highest with a mean of 4.34 an indication that respondents considered them to be very good followed by E-journals with a mean of 3.94 which are also considered very good. In the third position were print-based journals with a rating of 3.93 which is also considered as very good. In the fourth position were newspapers with a mean of 3.58 meaning they are rated as good. In the fifth position were conference proceedings with a mean of 3.16 meaning they were rated as good. The sixth position was taken by research projects with a mean of 3.14 and indication that they were rated as good. Theses and dissertations as well as government publications were rated well with mean of 2.96 and 2.92 respectively. Most of the information resources had good ratings and could be accessed and used by the students for their academic research.

Table 2: Rating of Information Resources

Resource	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Rating of books	109	3	5	4.34	.697
E-journal ratings	109	2	5	3.94	.768
Journal ratings	109	2	5	3.93	.920
Rating of Newspapers	109	1	5	3.58	1.227
Conference proceedings ratings	109	1	5	3.16	.884
Research projects	109	1	5	3.14	1.273
Theses and Dissertation rating	109	1	4	2.96	1.122

Government publication ratings	109	1	4	2.92	.924
Valid N (list wise)	109				

5.4. Adequacy of the Information Resources: It was further necessary to find out the views of the students on the adequacy of the information resources in the library. In order to achieve this, the respondents were provided with a scale to rate the adequacy of the resources. The scale ranged from one to five where one represented "inadequate" and five represented "extremely adequate". The results are presented on Table 3. It is evident from the research findings that books were considered to be very adequate as reflected by a mean of 4.11. E-journals were also found to be adequate with a mean of 3.72, newspapers with a mean of 3.62, Research Projects with a mean of 3.60, Journals with a mean of 3.17 and theses and dissertations with a mean of 3.03. Those considered as somewhat adequate were conference proceedings with a mean of 2.94 and government publications with a mean of 2.86. This implies that most of the resources were adequate except conference proceedings and government publications. The findings here indicated that most of the resources are adequate especially books and e-journals.

Table 3: Adequacy of Information Resources

Resource	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Adequacy of Books	109	2	5	4.11	.906
Adequacy of E-Journals	109	2	5	3.72	.973
Adequacy of Newspapers	109	2	5	3.62	1.034
Adequacy of Research Projects		2	5	3.60	.747
	109	1	4	3.17	1.023
Adequacy of Journals	109	1	4	3.03	1.221
Adequacy of Thesis and Dissertations	109	1	5	2.94	.993
Adequacy of Conference Proceedings	109				
Adequacy of Government Publications	109	1	4	2.86	.799
Valid N (listwise)					

5.5. Means of Accessing Information Resources: The second objective was to establish how the information resources are accessed by the respondents. They were requested to indicate the means through which they are able to access information resources in the library. From the means provided, they were required to tick all the means they use to access the resources. The results are presented on Table 4. It was established that 48.6 % of the postgraduate students access the information resources through the information literacy skills. 19.3 % of the students access information resources through the library webpage, 15.6 % of the students access the information resources through the library staff, another 15.6 % access the information resources through library brochures while 0.9 % through the Faculty. Most of the students are able to access the information resources using the skills acquired from the information literacy skills program.

Table 4: Means of Accessing Information Resources

Means of access	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Information Literacy Training	53	48.6
Library webpage	21	19.3
Library staff	17	15.6
Library brochures	17	15.6
Faculty	1	.9
Total	109	100.0

5.6. Frequency of Use of Library Information Resources: The third objective was to investigate the frequency with which the respondents accessed and used the library information resources. They were required to state on a scale of one to five how frequently they accessed the information resources. One represented never accessed the resources and five represented always accessed the resources. The results are presented on Table 5 and they indicated that books and E-journals were used more often. This is evident considering the mean of 4.53 for books and 4.10 for E-journals. In terms of usage, print-based journals had a mean of 3.91, research projects with a mean of 3.59, newspapers with a mean of 3.07 and theses and dissertations with a mean of 3.06. Those with low usage are government publications with a mean of 2.64 and conference proceedings with a mean of 2.58.

Table 5: Frequency of Use of Information Resources

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
How Frequently do you use books?	109	4	5	4.53	.501
How Frequently do you use E-Journals?	109	2	5	4.10	.902
How Frequently do you use Journals?	109	3	5	3.91	.674
How Frequently do you use Research Projects?	109	1	5	3.59	1.203

How Frequently do you use Newspapers?	109	1	5	3.07	1.007
How Frequently do you use Theses and Dissertations?	109	1	5	3.06	1.133
How Frequently do you use Government Publications?	109	1	5	2.64	1.014
How Frequently do you use Conference Proceedings?	109	1	4	2.58	.885
Valid N (list wise)	109				

5.7. Challenges of Access and Use of Information Resources: The forth objective was to identify the challenges respondents faced while accessing and using the information resources. From the list they were provided with, the results are presented on Table 6. The greatest challenge being, lack of adequate information technology skills among the students as supported by 57.8 % of the respondents. 22.9 % of the respondents also considered language barrier a challenge faced by students in accessing and using the library resources. This is because the University has a diversified population and some of the students do not speak fluent English. Inadequate library opening hours was also considered a challenge by 10.1 % of the respondents. Lack of awareness of the information resources was considered a challenge by 4.6 % of the respondents whereas another 4.6 % of the respondents considered lack of guidance from library staff as a challenge. The findings here indicate that despite the fact that most of the resources are adequate, the respondents lack sufficient information literacy skills to be able to access and use information resources effectively.

Table 6: Challenges of Access and Use of Information Resources

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inadequate library opening hours	11	10.1
Lack of adequate Information Technology skills	63	57.8
Lack of awareness of the information resources	5	4.6
Lack of guidance from library staff	5	4.6
Language barrier	25	22.9
Total	109	100.0

6. Conclusion: The Adventist University of Africa library has a variety of information resources available as revealed by the study and these include books, electronic journals,

print-based journals, newspapers, theses and dissertations and research projects, conference proceedings and government publications. Although the quantities and quality vary from one resource to another, the general observation is that the information resources are sufficient but the respondents need skills necessary to enable them access and use the resources effectively. Based on this study and the results revealed, there are suggestions on how staff at Adventist University of Africa library can improve access and use of the information resources.

7. Recommendations: This study evaluated access and use of information resources at Adventist University of Africa library and out of the findings, the researcher enumerated recommendations that the library management needs to implement to enhance the student's optimal use of the library information resources.

- Library staff need to enhance the information literacy skills programme to sharpen the student's information search skills.
- Devise promotional strategies to popularize information resources available to the students. This will improve access and usage of the information resources.
- Information resources need to be constantly kept up-to-date, relevant and sufficient to serve the students well.
- Ensure that information resources are available in other languages like French to address the language diversity at the University.
- Opening hours to be adjusted to enable the students to use the library more effectively.
- More print-based journals need to be subscribed to cover all the programs.
- The University to ensure that all students are computer literate in order to gain skills that enables them to retrieve information using Information Communication Technology (ICT).

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