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TIPS ON THE UTILIZATION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN LIBRARY

By

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ABSTRACT

In any educational system, library has an important role to play in uplifting the educational standard of the individuals. It is a place entrusted with the acquisition, preservation, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. University libraries acquire materials to support teaching, learning, and research programmes. This explains why various library services are developed to promote the effective use of the materials by library users. This paper therefore examines the services offered by the University of Ilorin library which include: library orientation, user education, registration of users, circulation service, serial service, computer service and other services. The paper also examines library catalogues and their relevance to library users. Based on the discussion, recommendations are made to improve library services that are provided to users at the University of Ilorin.

INTRODUCTION

The University of Ilorin was established as a full-fledged University in October, 1976. It took off with only three (3) faculties, namely, Arts, Education and Science. Presently, there are eight (8) faculties, namely, Agriculture, Arts, Business and Social Sciences, Education, Engineering, Health Sciences, Law, and Sciences. The library was established to provide strong bibliographical support to its parent institution. This is done by providing up to date resources for staff, students, and other researchers.

The University of Ilorin Library operates two branch libraries: a medical Library at the mini campus and a Law Library at the main campus. According to Annual Report for 2004/2005 session, the staff population of the library consisted 17 Librarians, 19 library officers, 12 secretarial and Administrative Staff, 40 library Assistants and other supporting staff. The library presently caters for a user population of about 20,000, including postgraduate undergraduates, diploma and sandwich students.

Library Services

The following major services are being rendered by the University of Ilorin Library.

Orientation Programme for Freshers

Since its inception in 1976, the University library has instituted an orientation Programme for fresh students. It usually takes place in the second week of a new session. During this period, fresh students are acquainted with the various sections of the library

and its diverse materials so as to prepare them for maximum benefits that they can derive from the materials.

During the orientation week, the University librarian usually addresses the students by exposing them to the library resources and services that the students can enjoy. After the address of the University librarian, the students undertake a guided tour of the library where they are shown the location of the materials and the importance of the library Catalogues are explained to them. From experience, fewer than 20% of the fresh students take part in the orientation week. The main reason is that the bulk of the students would not have registered by then because of delay in the release of the Admission letter.

Library Service

The objectives of the University of Ilorin library are, among others: to collect the most current materials in support of learning, teaching and research activities of the university; to disseminate relevant information to staff and clientele; to support the University's effort to develop its human, and non-human resources; to cooperate with other University libraries in resources sharing through photocopying, inter-library lending and courier services.

User Education

The University of Ilorin library organizes user-education programme for its users. One such programme is "Use of Library" aspect of General Studies (GNS III) which is compulsory for all fresh students of the University. The aim of this course is to equip the students, with skills to become better users of the library in particular and other information centres in general.

Registration of Users

At the University of Ilorin fresh students and newly employed lecturers must get registered with the library before they can have access into the library materials and services. Adeoti-Adekeye (2005) observed that libraries require their users to register because of the following reasons:

- (i) To identify those persons who have the right to use a library,
- (ii) To give a user some special form of identification, to allow the charging out of materials, and;
- (iii) To facilitate the issuance of letters of introduction to other libraries.

The following categories of users are registered by the University of Ilorin library: Academic staff; Senior Administrative Staff; and Students. Occasional users such as Government Officials, research scholars who may be introduced by their respective librarians are often allowed to enjoy library facilities at the discretion of the University librarian.

On registration, each clientele is given an identity card with his/her passport photograph affixed, to give him/her access to the library collection. He/she is given a "Reader's Guide" which provides information about library resources and the way to make the optimal use of them.

Antiwi (1989) reported that unauthorized users pose a serious threat to library collections such as stealing and mutilation of materials. This is basically the reason why the library insists that all registered users should produce their library identity cards before using its resources. This is to ensure that only bonafide users have access to the collection.

Circulation Service

This is a service area where for most library users. Adeoti-Adekeye (2005) stated that every library should have a circulation policy which is a set of guiding rules and regulations. The policy may or may not be a written one, but it is better to have a written policy for the purpose of consistence. Among the issues that form part of the policy are borrowing periods, number of books a user can borrow, the amount a defaulter has to pay as fine and so on. Library registration and the records of the library users are kept in the circulation section. Sending of overdue notices and fine procedures are also done here. Other functions performed at the circulation section include; processing of reservation, taking of statistics, weeding of obsolete materials, shelving of returned materials etc.

Reference Service

The reference section of the library specializes in the provision of . Reference services giving readers' advice, and keeping reference materials. Books in the reference section cannot be borrowed out; they can only be consulted in the library. This section houses a variety of material including encyclopedias, dictionaries, manuals, yearbooks, biographies, abstracts, and indexes. On application, lecturers may be allowed to take reference materials as "overnight loan" if such materials are to be used in the laboratory or in class.

A reference librarian is always on hand to receive enquiries from users and assist them to make use of relevant publications in the library. He/she directs users to the resources of other libraries when the need arises. It is pertinent to mention that reference services, especially enquiries, were not fully utilized by users in 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 as only a total 300 such enquiries were made. It is possible that most of the users are not aware that librarian can assist them to deal with enquiries. Ideally, the reference desk and circulation desk should be placed at a strategic position so that users can effectively interact with the reference librarian/circulation librarian.

Documents Service

This section houses vital government publications. Government document is a publication that appears at more or less specific time frame. Document service/section of the library comprises publications from governments, non-governmental organizations, world body, government agencies or ministries for the purpose of projecting the activities of the producing body. It may appear in book form and other formats such as gazettes, reports, newsletters, annuals, etc. Researchers/scholars can go to the Document unit/section to get relevant materials For their research work.

Serial Service

Omoniyi, (2005) a serial is a publication that appears in parts. Serials are published regularly or irregularly either on daily, weekly, monthly or yearly basis without any specific date in which the publication will cease to appear. Serials are normally published by Associations, Journals, Newspapers, magazines, periodicals, memoirs, transactions of clubs and societies monographs etc. Lecturers, students, and researchers are expected to consult these materials. These materials are very important because of currency. They provide up to date information to keep lecturers, students alike and the researchers abreast of new development in their fields of knowledge.

Technical Services

The library is stocked with a good collection of equipment such as photocopying machines, internet, telex, fax machine, computers, film and microfiche readers, television sets, and video machines in order to support library operations.

Photocopying

The photocopying service, introduced since 1976, aimed at encouraging users to make copies of reserved materials, rare collections, Journals, etc. This service is provided within the copy right law, and the fees charged are very reasonable compared with other photocopying services outside the library. Thus, the photocopying service is not only meant to save library materials from being stolen or mutilated, but also to promote effective utilization of the library materials faculties. Photocopying is an important aspect of inter-library co-operation that librarians consider as an extension of inter-lending services because of facilitates photocopying of materials that the library does not have but which other libraries hold. It is also regarded as a substitute for book loans because it saves the scarce materials from getting lost in transit and at the same time maximizes the use of the collection.

Catalogues and its uses

The card and on-line catalogues are the index or keys to all collections in the library. Any users who can use the card catalogue or the on-line catalogue successfully will not have problems in using the collections of the library. The catalogues provide three main approaches in retrieving materials in the library. These are; Author approach, Title approach, and Subject approach.

(a) Author approach

When a user knows the author of a book, he/she can use the author's surname to locate the book he/she wants in the library by using Author/Title catalogue.

(b) Title approach

A book can also be located if only the title is known. The same Author/Title catalogue is used because the title cards are arranged together alphabetically in the Author/Title Catalogue. The same procedure employed in an Author/Title applies to the title entry to locate the book when you know the title of the book.

(c) Subject Approach

It is still possible for users who do not know the author or the title of the desired books to locate them through subject approach. If a user is given a topic or subject area, the best way to search for the material is by the use of the subject catalogue. The key words in the subjects of various disciplines are arranged in alphabetical order in the subject catalogue.

Computer Service

The introduction of computer system into the libraries has revolutionaries the concept of the library more than ever before. The University of Ilorin library has started using computer in its operations since 1997. . The house-keeping functions such as cataloguing, classification, serials control, acquisition, and circulation control are now being performed using automated system. Many routine tasks such as the provision of Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), CD-ROM searches, and, internet services are also provided to users. In the process of searching for books at the University of Ilorin library, users have to follow the procedure below:

- (a) Double click the OPAC icon.
- (b) Type your keyword and press enter key, the list of materials, and the materials matching your search will appear on the screen .
- (c) Click on search strategy at the lower left side of the screen and pick the search term you prefer.
- (d) Click on the arrow to view the resources, click again on the arrow to view detail of the resource. The location mark is at the top right side of the screen.
- (e) Click home button at the lower right corner of the screen to go back to the beginning

Binding Service

This service Involves repairs damaged library materials for preservation for another periods of time. Binding of library materials is necessary because budgetary allocations to the University library by the Government of Nigeria has fallen far below financial requirements which government has also blamed on persistent economic recession. This has made it difficult for the university to purchase volumes of materials the library requires from within and outside Nigeria.

Recommendations

It is suggested that the library orientation day should take place during . the fourth week of the first semester because by this time most of the fresh students will have been registered. The new arrangement will make the orientation more beneficial to the generality of new students.

It is suggested that the "Use of Library" aspect of GNS III should be made to stand alone as a credit course. This will make the students to be more serious with the course.

The post-graduate and sandwich students should be asked to sign clearance at the completion of their programmes for the purpose of arresting library materials in their possession. It is because this category of Unilorin students does not sign clearance that the library does not allow them to borrow its materials on loan.

Conclusion

It has been the general view within the context of University educational purposes that libraries should be well-funded, well stocked, well-equipped and well-staffed to ensure its maximum use. The University of Ilorin has to a large extent been allocating the financial provision to the library in line with the budget allocation formula as planned by the National Universities Commission (One), Abuja.

Inadequate funding has however adversely affected the University of Ilorin library in a number of ways. First, the acquisition of new materials, especially books, has slowed down. Payment of subscription rates in respect of current Journals and other vital publications are either delayed or not made at all. In spite of the numerous challenges facing the University of Ilorin library in its drive to serve its clientele effectively, it is forging ahead to ensure that the clientele maximally utilize the available resources/services without much stress.

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