

AWARENESS AND USE OF LIBRARY INFORMATION RESOURCES: A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH

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Abstract:

Purpose: This paper reviewed literature on awareness and use of Library Information Resources. The review is necessary so as to guide students as well as scholars of Library and Information Science who may want to be exposed to the concepts and elements of Library and Information Resources.

Design/Methodology: The exploratory approach was used for this study; first a conceptual framework was examined. This was followed by review of Ranganathan's five laws of Library Science and the Situation Awareness law finally position was taken on the awareness and use of library and information resources.

Findings: The paper found out that the awareness of library and information resources facilitates the use of these resources.

Originality/Value: The value of this paper lies in its identification and discussion on review of the views and position on the concepts of library and information resources. It also brings together scholars and schools of thought ideology on library and information resources which are expected to aid those in quest for knowledge.

Keywords: Awareness, Use, Library, Information Resources, Library

Introduction

The major aim of setting up libraries is to encourage and promote readership as well as scholarship. Hence, the library designs its programs of services and provides the necessary information resources to meet the information needs of the clients. It is in light of this that the library endeavors to provide viable information resources. The types of information provided in libraries are categorized as 'hard fact' they are not ephemeral. These information resources transform an individual from a nobody to a somebody. It transforms illiterate community to literate society. Library information resources could be in print (paper) or non-print (electronic) form. For the library to achieve its goal, the people it is meant to serve must be aware of its resources and existence.

Awareness means the ability to know or realize the existence of a thing. Awareness is knowledge about something that exists or understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience (Suleiman, Rajeev, & Hassana, 2018). In addition, it is 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 (Ani & Ahiazu 2008). When users become aware of library services that is when they can make use of it. This implies that if there is no awareness of library services, there will be no use as well. In other words, awareness triggers use.

The term, "use of library" is defined as perusing the stock (browsing), asking for assistance from library staff, actually finding information of value, taking out a book in the library, studying one's own material in the library, coming into the library and so on. Use, as applied to the library and its users means utilization of library information resources and services in solving ones academic or other personal problems. Those that make use of library services are called users. Aina (2004) states that the term user is all embracing used broadly to include all those who avail themselves of the resources and services offered by the library, public library inclusive. It encompasses various terms such as patron, client, reader, customer, scholar, and consumer.

This paper will give a review of literature as they relate to library information resources. The review is necessary so as to guide students as well as scholars of library and information science who may want to be exposed to the concepts and elements of library information resources. The paper will carry out review that will bother on the concept of library, library information resources, awareness of library information resources, and use of library information resources. It will review the five laws of library science and the situation awareness theory. It will finally take position on awareness and use of library information resources.

Concept of the Library

The term 'library' means different things to different people depending on where they stand on the enlightenment spectrum. To some, it is a bookstore; a building where books are kept for safe custody overseen by a stern-looking watchman in the name of a librarian, essentially ensuring that the books are not tampered with unduly. To many, the library is a place of reading and studying; where examination-writing candidates make their second homes to read their textbooks and notebooks in preparation. This explains why many libraries have seasonal uses as their patrons have a well-known pattern of visits and usage, which are at the designated examination periods. Only a few others conceive the library as an organization of information resources meant for use (Agbanu, 2004).

The Encyclopedia Britannica, defined library as a collection of information resources in print or in other forms that is organized and made accessible for reading or study. The word derives from the Latin liber ("book"). The origin of libraries lies in the keeping of written records, a practice that dates at least to the 3rd millennium BC in Babylonia. The first libraries as repositories of books were those of the Greek temples and those established in conjunction with the Greek schools of philosophy in the 4th century BC. Today's libraries frequently contain periodicals, microfilms, tapes, videos, compact discs, and other materials in addition to books. The growth of on-line communications networks has enabled library users to search electronically linked databases worldwide.

According to Gregorian as cited in Okunoye cited in Ishola, and Obadare (2014), an investment in libraries, is an act of faith in the continuity of life. He went further to represent the library in the following words;

libraries contain the heritage of humanity: the record of its triumph and failure, its intellectual, scientific and artistic achievements, and its collective memory. They are source of knowledge, scholarship and wisdom. They are an institution withal, where the left and the right God and the devil are together classified and retained in order to teach us what to emulate and what not to repeat. Libraries are in short, the mirror held up to the face of human kind, the diary of human race. Libraries are not only repositories of past human endeavour, they are instrument of civilization (Oladime, & Adio, 2017). They provide tools for learning, a laboratory of human aspiration, a window to the future. They are a source of self-renewal, intellectual growth, and hope. In this land and everywhere on earth, they are a medium of progress, autonomy, empowerment, independence and self-determination.

A library is a collection of information, sources, resources, books, and services, and the structure in which it is housed: it is organized for use and maintained by a public body, an institution, or a private individual. In the more traditional sense, a library is a collection of books. The term can mean the collection, the building that houses such a collection, or both (Agbanu 2004). Public and institutional collections and services may be intended for use by people who choose not to - or cannot afford to - purchase an extensive collection themselves, who need material no individual can reasonably be expected to have, or who require professional assistance with their research.

However, with the collection of media other than books for storing information, many libraries are now also repositories and access points for maps, prints, or other documents and works of art on various storage media such as microform (microfilm/microfiche), audio tapes, CDs, LPs, cassettes, videotapes, and DVDs. Libraries may also provide public facilities to access CD-ROMs, subscription databases, and the Internet (Ezekwe & Muokebe, 2012). Thus, libraries include places to get unrestricted access to information in many formats and from many sources. In addition to providing materials, they also provide the services of specialists, librarians, who are experts at finding and organizing information and at interpreting information needs (Anike, 2014).

More recently, libraries are understood as extending beyond the physical walls of a building, by including material accessible by electronic means, and by providing the assistance of librarians in navigating and analyzing tremendous amounts of knowledge with a variety of digital tools. The term "library" has itself acquired a secondary meaning: "a collection of useful material for common use," and in this sense is used in fields such as computer science, mathematics and statistics, electronics and biology (Agbanu, 2004).

For the purpose of this study, the researcher then defines a library as a collection of books and non-book information carrying resources selected, acquired, processed, and organised in a building by a trained librarian for easy retrieval and use of the clientele. These information resources are used either for academic, research, leisure, or aesthetic purposes. An academic library is simply a library situated or located in a university or any other tertiary institution.

Concept Awareness of Library Information Resources

Awareness is defined as the ability of people to realize or know that something exists. It can also be defined as one's knowledge or understanding of a particular subject, situation or trend. Merriam – Webster (2002) defined awareness as understanding a lot about what is happening around someone and the person or persons paying attention to it either positively or negatively. Awareness is a situation where someone is informed of something. It is the act of knowing about the existence of something. Awareness can also be defined as the act of having perception or wide knowledge of the existence of something.

The term awareness, according to Cambridge Dictionary Online is knowledge that something exists, or understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience. The Macmillan Dictionary defined awareness as "knowledge or understanding of a subject, issue, or situation" or ...the ability to notice things. A well-known definition by Dourish and Bellotti (2001) states that awareness is an understanding of the activities of others, which provides a context for your own activity. The awareness step consists of the processing of information to provide it to the other participants. Therefore, awareness is a process that sums up the knowledge extracted from an environment and updates it thanks to the interaction between the participants and their environments (Nova, 2002). According to Schmidt (2002), awareness is an attribute of

action. Doing one thing while taking heed of other relevant occurrences as two parallel lines of action, namely: heedfully, competently, mindfully, and accountably. Heath, et al... (2002) defined awareness as a feature of practical action which is systematically accomplished within developing course of everyday activities. Furthermore, Heath et al (2002) stated that awareness is a social activity, in that we take cues from those around us which can influence our understanding and lead to a greater shared awareness; and that awareness can be achieved in collaboration with others.

According to Fullard (2007), awareness is the state or the ability to perceive, to feel, or to be conscious of events, objects or a new trend such as new technology or system. Broadly, Fullard further stated that awareness is the state or quality of being aware of something.

In general perspective Rahman and Ramzy (2004) stated that awareness maybe referred to public, common knowledge or understanding about a social scientific or political issue. Subair and Kgankenna (2002) defined awareness as the state of having knowledge or cognizance of something. It is the knowledge gained through one's own perceptions or by means of information. Awareness also means having knowledge of, appreciation of, recognition of, attention of, perception of, consciousness of, acquaintance with, enlightenment with and familiar with new trends or issues (Arunachalam 2011). Awareness is the state of being informed of something. According to Danis (2007), concept of awareness revolves around acceptance and knowledge of existence and relevance of any technology. Furthermore, Danis stated that awareness of any system or technology goes with the activities of others which play important role in enabling effective collaboration among distributed work group members that are involved in the system.

Thus, awareness of library resources, in this study, means the knowledge of the existence of the resources in the library. This knowledge of library resources will enable a library user to use the particular library and its resources. Therefore, awareness is the gateway to the use of library resources by the clientele. It means being informed of the quality of the resources available in the library in question. Awareness of library resources, however, concerns itself not solely with re-establishing face-to-face situations; awareness has a broader meaning and is related to trend-spotting, alerts to research results in a certain domain, changes in the structure and content of library resources, personal changes within a library as well as knowledge about objects that may help carrying out one's task. Awareness in library science is mainly to know what sort of resources in the same field are available or is to know what is important to the user and filter out what is not important to user.

In this study, the concept of awareness is the degree to which undergraduate students in universities in Anambra State know or have heard about the existing library information resources in the university library and how informed they are concerning it. Awareness of library information resources is the knowledge of the library information resources in the library.

Concept Use of Library Information Resources

Use means the act or practice or employing something. It is a method or manner of employing or applying something. Use is synonymous to application, employment, exercise, operation, harness, utilize, exploit. According to the Webster's New World dictionary of American English, use indicates putting to service of anything usually for an intended or fit purpose. Ilo (2001) stated that use means to access, install, download, copy, or otherwise benefits from using the functionality of any technology. Omotayo (2010) defined use as the ability of academics or researchers to adopt and adapt technologies to achieve a purpose or set goals. The concept of use is the ability of someone or group of persons to learn to apply knowledge to service (Rahman & Ramzy, 2004). Use is the ability of one or group of persons to do something and achieve a set purpose(s).

In this study, concept of use is the ability and the extent to which undergraduate students exploit library resources to achieve quality education and easy research in the universities in Anambra State Nigeria. From the above definitions, use implies the act of employing something to achieve a purpose. It also suggests the amount to which resources are employed to achieve a purpose.

The researcher thus, defines use of library resources as the act or practice of utilizing or exploiting the resources in the library. This implies that, when an information seeker consults the materials from the library,

then the library resources have been put to use. This was why (Ishola, & Obadare, 2014) opined that constant use of the library no matter the type enlarges the knowledge-base of any individual and so makes him awareness conscious.

Concept Library Information Resources

According to Aina (2004), library information resources are information carriers which appear in a variety of formats such as books, serials, maps, compact disc, etc. In words of Akinpelu as cited in Abdulganiy (2014), library information resources are potential information contained in the information carriers in the library collection. According to Ezekwe and Muokebe (2012), library materials can be defined as any material capable of conveying information and ideas, imaginative or factual which can be organized for use. They further explained that services in the library are offered using various types of books, non-book materials, in various formats formally known as stock, information materials, library materials, or library resources. Igben, as cited in Basey, (2006), says that library resources are business of providing information materials and services to its user community. This means that any material in the library which is used to provide information to the users of the library is categorised as library information resource. Library collections have almost always contained a variety of materials. Contemporary libraries maintain collections that include not only printed materials such as manuscripts, books, newspapers, and magazines, but also art reproductions, films, sound and video recordings, maps, photographs, microfiches, CD-ROMs, computer software, online databases, and other media (Ezekwe & Muokebe 2012).

Electronic resources which is a category of library information resources is a system in which information is stored electronically and made accessible through electronic system and computer networks. Aina, Mutula, and Tiamiyu (2008), recorded that electronic resources are information resources that are available in computer processible form. E- resources databases that can be subscribed to by university libraries include AJOL, BOOKBOON, SAGE, EBSCOHOST, JSTOR. In addition to maintaining collections within library buildings, modern libraries often feature telecommunications links that provide users with access to information at remote sites.

Thus, the researcher defines library information resources as information resources, information materials, information carriers, or learning resources placed at the library for use by the library patrons or clientele. These resources are usually selected, acquired, processed, organised and stored by a trained librarian.

Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science

The Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science was propounded by Dr. Ranganathan in 1931. The first, second and third laws only will be discussed because they were adjudged the most relevant to the present study.

1. Books are for use,
2. Every reader his/her book
3. Every book its reader,
4. Save the time of the reader,
5. Library is a living organism.

Among the five laws listed above, the first three laws will be discussed because they are the most related to this study. The first law is that books are for use. It is imperative to ensure library patrons use the materials we select and purchase for them. Libraries are not just about storing books; they are about people having access to books. This is something Ranganathan made clear in his own discussion of the first law (Ranganathan 1988). His talks and writings emphasize the preservation of information and knowledge to be as important as access to information and knowledge. Undoubtedly, both preservation and access are important, and the availability of digital technologies that Dr. Ranganathan could only have dreamt of has a vital role to play in preservation and access. Librarianship is now blessed to have the opportunity of making knowledge available through digitization, but digitization can best be justified by focusing on the priorities laid down in the first law. The first law is also forward-thinking in its emphasis on the library's location.

Increasingly we are seeing libraries sited, or even relocated, in more accessible locations in order to increase customers. There is debate among library professionals on the issue of merging of public libraries with other services, such as sports centres, or moving the library to main thoroughfares rather than outlying parts of the community. The implication of first law of library science to this study is the emphasis on the optimum use of resources, facilities, and services.

The second law, "every reader his or her book," means that we all have diverse interests and that there is a book out there to satisfy each of us. The core need is to fight for the right of users to information of all kinds, the consistent battle against censorship and inequality of access that has governed civilisation since its inception. Our duty is to help users find the information they require and ensure any blocks in the way are not blocks we have created. Barring access to knowledge is totally against the philosophy of Dr. Ranganathan's law. In fact, the second law provides roots to the freedom to access information and knowledge in the forms of writings of all kinds and to be informed on topics that others may wish to suppress. The second law reminds us to be impartial in our dealings with users. The implication of the second law to this study is to meet user needs satisfactorily by collecting and interpreting information, understanding the needs of users, and matching the needs with its resources. This way, users become aware of the available library resources. The library should develop its collection keeping in mind the present and future requirements of its users. The library collection should be a mix of old and rare material as well as of the latest material reflecting advances in various fields.

The third law: every book its reader (Ranganathan, 1988) advocates easy access to materials, and one way to do so is by putting people together with what they require. Putting books into the hands of people who do not necessarily know what they need is also at the heart of the third law. We could interpret reader development as being part of the third law, since we promote books to users that may not be known to them and that may offer opportunities for enrichment that other titles do not. Historically, reference work has been identified within the third law, and this continues to be the case in the virtual library. Virtual reference services continue to grow in popularity in both academic and public libraries. Libraries and information centres are launching virtual enquiry services through their websites. They are accepting models created for this purpose by world renowned libraries, especially university libraries. These are exciting developments, focused on expanding services to where and when users may need them. They allow librarians to continue to use their skills in tracking down quality information for users and will become a staple feature of library services. The implication of the third law to this study is in performing activities that take library products and services to the users: publicizing the value and benefits, promotional campaigns, advocacy, public relations, personal communication, etc. The library should use promotional tools to publicize its information resources, facilities, and services. It should direct its efforts to attracting new users to the library and reach out to its existing users by providing library services at their doorstep. It should give its users the personal touch and develop a feeling of belonging in the library.

The Ranganathan's Five Laws of Library Science as explained above frames the study. The laws specify the need to bring library information resources to meet the need of the library users. The law can be linked to creating awareness of the library information resources to the users as well as creating enabling environment and resources that enhance use of library information resources.

Situation Awareness Theory (SA)

The theory of Situation Awareness (SA) was propounded by Ackoff R. L. in the year 1999. SA is the process to be aware of the current situation. In the literature of cognition SA occurs under different names, such as situational awareness, situation assessment and situational measurement, the different names are aimed to describe the same thing, and that is the result of the process that precede decision making. Thus, the theory of Situation Awareness states that: Situation Awareness (SA) is the process to be aware of the current situation which usually precedes decision making. In the quest of making as good decisions as possible, decision makers often are presented with all known information. Even if the information is not of any known

use for the decision, it is presented to the decision maker, in the belief that the more information the decision maker has, the better decision will be made. There are two approaches to situation awareness, theoretical approach and adaptive learning system. The theoretical approach which includes Orientation activity is intended for describing the internal process that a person is presuming to reach SA, and adaptive-learning management system is intended for the management of an organization to do the same. All gears towards decision making for either an individual, a group, or an organization. The SA is usually applied by the army in a war front so as to know the position of the enemy, hence decide when and how best to strike.

The situation awareness (SA) theory is related to the present study because it is concerned with the recognition or realization of the current situation thereby leading to decision making. The theory explains how the undergraduate's awareness of library information resources available in the library motivates them into using the library resources. In other words, the student's awareness of library information resources helps them to decide whether to make use of the resources or not. When the library users know the state of the resources available in the library, it will help them to use the library information resources to the maximum. This implies that, the knowledge about the situation of the information resources in the academic library helps the users which includes the undergraduates to either consult them or go for other alternatives for their academic activities.

Literature review

Awareness of Library Information Resources

The quantity and quality of information materials are fundamental to the survival of a library or information centre and to its parent body. In this regard, Nwalo (2000) notes that awareness of relevant information materials is the hallmark of a library. Thus, library resources should be organized (both print and electronic) for the accessibility to their patrons (Oyelude, 2004). Oyelude noted that awareness enables students and staff of tertiary institutions to use information and communication technologies to retrieve current information electronically which is another form of information resource found in the library. Haruna and Mabawonku (2004) posit that for information to be meaningful and useful, users must be aware of its availability at the time it is needed. Adeoye, and Popoola, (2018) reiterated that once users become aware of an information source, they tend to use it. The implication of this is that information sources which users are not aware of would be under-used. Therefore, what is fundamental to library information provision is to create users' awareness.

According to Owolabi and Atama (2007), awareness is a pre-requisite to subsequent usage of open access publications (such as library resources) unless an individual uses it unknowingly. Obuh and Bozimo (2012) stated that awareness raises consciousness and knowledge about a certain technology and its personal and social benefits. This view supported their study which established awareness as the central determinant of user attitude and behavior towards technology. In line with Obuh and Bozimo's (2012) view, awareness of library resources can be said to influence the use.

Dulle and Minishi-Majanja (2010) stated that in the open access environment, awareness has been acknowledged as an important factor that determines usage of mode of scholarly communication. This review suggests that awareness brings about use of library resources. For instance, a student who is not aware that the cost of accessing Online Databases (such as EBSCO host) which the University Library provides is incorporated in the school fees and had been paid by him or her may be deterred from using such resources ignorantly (in the thinking that only those that pay use it). Thus, awareness can be directly linked with use. One has to be aware that something exists before thinking of making use of it. This implies that use of library resources may be affected by the level of awareness.

Use of Library Information Resources

In one of his numerous works, Rahman (2004) acknowledges that the Five Laws of Library Science formulated by Ranganathan revolve around the user or are user-centred, thus emphasizing the service nature of the profession. One of the laws, "books are for use" implies that information resources in a library system are for use. To Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), it is impossible for any nation or institution to develop without

creative and imaginative use of accumulated information. It may be appropriate to deduce that the decision making of an individual to a great extent depends on the degree of information resource patronage or use.

In any given library, quite a number of resources (finance, human and materials) are usually devoted towards achieving its target objectives. The efforts geared to make a variety of information resources available and accessible in a library will be a waste if such materials are not adequately utilized. In essence, it is through the use of available library materials that academic excellence can be achieved. Ishola, and Obadare (2014) asserts that the use of library information resources by users and indeed their satisfaction with library services depend on availability of suitable learning materials, accommodation and competent staff. Angello (2010) opines that libraries all over the world play vital roles in the intellectual development of students because such libraries are the nerve centres of all academic activities in any citadel of learning. She further argues that to achieve academic excellence, students usually make heavy use of library resources. Thus, Ajayi as cited in Ajibero, (2004) notes that students who do not appreciate the value of the library are at disadvantage and may visit the library to only read for examinations.

O’conor, (2002) while writing on the impact of medical libraries on clinical decision-making in Nigerian university teaching hospital reports that information provided by the library was appropriate to their clinical decisions. He points out that medics rely mostly on their institution’s library and personal data collections for information. He accordingly notes that information is sought for the purposes of managing patient, evaluating new drugs and support for the diagnosis of ailments. In fact, the “law of comparative advantage” in Economics will facilitate each departmental library to focus only on materials that can satisfy the information needs of its immediate users instead of striving for many disciplines.

Furthermore, Kuhlthau as cited in Obiyan, Obiyan, and Aidenojie (2011) noted that in seeking information, the user is usually confronted with five possible types of inaccessibility, that is, conceptual, linguistic, critical, bibliographic, and physical inaccessibility. This inevitably leads to low use of library services.

Conclusion

The review of related literature started with an exploration of the Concept of the Library, Concept Awareness of Library Information Resources, Concept Use of Library Information Resources, and Concept Library Information Resources. From these reviews, it is obvious that library information resources could be understood as information resources, information materials, information carriers, or learning resources placed at the library for use by the library patrons or clientele. Two theoretical models which include Ranganathan’s five laws of Library Science and Situation awareness theory were also reviewed. The theories threw light on what is expected from both libraries and individuals in order to achieve proper awareness and use of library and information resources.

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