

An Evaluation of Reference Service in Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri

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Abstract

This study was conducted to Evaluate the reference service in Ramat Library University of Maiduguri. The study was guided by four objectives and four research questions. Related literature was reviewed on Evolution of reference service, concept of reference service, reference source, types of reference service, role of inter-library loan and evaluation of reference service. The study adopted survey research method. Three hundred and forty-one (341) respondents were selected for the study. The respondents comprise male and female students. The results of the study showed that there is availability of a dictionaries and serials as reference sources, inadequate ready reference service, shortage of qualified staff to satisfied users' needs, inter-library loan as well as ineffective management of available resources. It was recommended that the Ramat library should explore the means of generating fund, improve the quality ready reference service to users, adopt constant or periodical evaluation of reference collection, and restructuring the library instruction programme where the emphasis will be laid on practical rather than theory.

Keywords: Reference Services, Reference Sources, Reference Librarian, Reference Materials.

Introduction

Libraries flourish in order to help the readers in their use of the library. It is the reference service that builds the reputation of the library. If good and efficient reference service is provided to the clientele, the usefulness of the library is recognized, whatever the size of the library, it will receive queries of one kind or the other from the readers, which must be answered promptly within the resources of the library (purushotham, 2013, Mohammed, 2012).

However, the term reference service according to Udensi and Akon (2014) and Okolo, (2002) is a direct personal assistance to readers seeking for information in the library. Consequently,

reference services in Nigeria libraries are an age long traditional as reference librarians serve as pilot toward directing information seekers on the latest information that are inherent in a particular field of human endeavor, the provision of qualitative reference service will no doubt promote research and development for national development(Oyegunle 2013).

Martins (2009) in his article title “societal transformation and reference service in the Academic Library” emphasized on the importance and relevance of reference service in academic libraries. It is true that academic institutions are generally research oriented; they need reference resources for fact finding and research purpose such collections should so considerably strong in terms of quality and quantity and up to date consisting of the most authoritative works in the major schools and knowledge guided by criteria for selection.

Base on the above reasons, the researcher is motioned to carry out this study to be able to uncover some of the problems that might be responsible for the evaluation of reference services in Ramat library, University of Maiduguri.

Statement of the Problem

The study was designed to undertake the evaluation of reference service A case study of Ramat library, University of Maiduguri. It has been observed that there are likely inadequate reference resources, shortage of professional librarians, as well as inadequate funding by the Universities and so on (Akparobore, 2011).Oyewusi and oyebode (2009) affirm that many Universities in Nigeria have not been able to acquire collections compressive enough to meet the need of their users due to inadequate funding of the Universities. The 10% allocation meant for the library stipulated by the National University Commission (NUC) has not been adhere to in many Nigeria Universities. And this has resulted to poor reference service delivery which has relegated the library to the backward stage (Olalokun, 2003). This calls for the need to study the situation of RamatLibrary University of Maiduguri and provide the necessary line of action.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to determine:

1. The type of reference source to support reference services in the Ramat Library University of Maiduguri.
2. The different types of reference service offered in Ramat Library University of Maiduguri.
3. The roles of inter- library loan and documentary delivering in reference and information service in the Ramat library.
4. The guidelines in evaluating reference service in Ramat library University of Maiduguri.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study: -

1. What are the types of reference source available in Ramat Library University of Maiduguri?
2. What are the types of reference service offered in the Ramat library?
3. What are the roles of inter- library loan in providing effective delivering service in the Ramat library University of Maiduguri?
4. What are the guidelines in evaluating references service in Ramat library?

Literature Review

Concept of Reference Service

According to Bopp and Smith (2001), historians of reference service usually trace modern concept of reference work to Samuel Green's (1876) in his article titled "personal relations between librarian library readers". Later published in American library journal (now library journal). While it is doubtful that Green actually invented the idea of reference service for library user, Green was the first to speak publicly about the concept and was the first to discuss it in writing in both his speech to the first meeting of the American Library Association and Green article discussed the need for librarian's activity to assist members of their communities in using library resource. While the term "reference" did not involve until several decades later Rothstein (1953), the publication of Green's article helped to popularized the new concept of reference service.

According to Idris, Oji and Abana (2011) citing Gama (2008), reference service is the personal assistance given by librarian to users in pursuit of information; the assistance could be information itself or it could be any library activity deliberately designed to facilitate easy retrieval of information. Ifidom (1997), Patitungkho, and Deshpande, (2011). sees reference service as the spring-board to the library and librarianship, where one is involved with all aspect of information, both theoretical and practical. It is therefore, very important for reference librarian most especially in an academic library to make their services available to users and give them the opportunity to be aware of the services. According to some statistics, for instance users' enquiries at the reference desk are declining (Palmer, 1999; Chowdhury, 2002; Lankes, 2000; & Lipow, 1999), Today the reference librarian's responsibilities have increased by societal expectations for information access through enhanced electronic capabilities. Reference librarians are the key to the continued success of libraries. Several researchers have discussed the new role of librarian's in the digital age.

Reference Sources

The reference source has been severally defined. However, it could be seen as the stock-in trade of the reference librarian. It is the material with which the reference librarian attempts to answer reference questions. (ALA glossary of library and information science of 1988) defines a reference book as (a) book designed by the arrangement and treatment of its subject matter to be consulted for definite items of information rather than to be read consecutively”. And (b) a book whose use is restricted to the library building. Oyedum (2005) defined reference book/sources as book designed by the arrangement and treatment of its subject matter to be consulted for definite item of information rather to be read consecutively. Therefore, reference is publication that provide background and factual information to a subject matter. They are not meant to be read from cover to cover they are used within the library and also, they are meant to be consulted for specific information needs.

However, Martins (2009), in his article “societal transformation and reference services in Academic library” emphasized on the importance and relevance of reference service in academic libraries. It is true academic institutions are generally research oriented; the need for reference resources for fact findings and research purposes. Such collection should be considerably strong in term of quality and quantity and up to date consisting of the most authoritative work in the major schools and knowledge guided by criteria for selection.

Ready-Reference Questions

Ready-reference service is very common in our libraries and information centers. It takes the nature of factual information that can be obtained with easy or at best with the use of one or two reference tools. Questions in this category include statements about “correct spelling of a word” “correct address of a place and” how to define a word”. This may be like where did the 8th African Games (COJA) take place? Which country hosted the 2003 commonwealth Heads of Government and Ministers? “when did Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe become the President of Nigeria? “when was African Union formed? These questions are very common in reference sections of University librarians (Evarest, 2008).

The ALA glossary of library and information science (1983), defined reference question as any request by a library user for information or assistance in location information which involves an encounter in person, by telephone or by other means between the user and a member of the reference staff.

Information and Referral Services

Often times libraries identify community resources and agencies with special service or information that library users or information seekers ask for. From time to time, these users can be referred to those agencies or organizations for the purpose of satisfying their information and referral services (Evarest 2008, Tiwari 2013). Achebe, (2012) was of the

view that reference and information services is an aspect of library service in which contact between the reader and library materials is established through staff assistance, matching the user with the library materials which could be printed or electronic. Achebe (2012) further said that as a service legally provided gain saying that reference and information service is the life-wise and bridge of any library. The absence of this service can make or more the image of not only the library but also that of profession.

Methodology

The research design used in this study is survey research method. This method is appropriate for the study because the method is effective for generating data from a relatively large number of cases at a particular time. “The result of a research that employed survey method can be obtained within a fairly short period of time because it allows the use of sample instead of the whole population”. (Ajiferuks and Aina 2002, Ugah, 2008). The population of the study comprises of bonified registered undergraduate students in the Ramat library as at 2019/2020 academic session, and they are 3067. 341 respondents were sampled out of the 3067 population of the study using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size. The data collection instrument used was structured questionnaire, which was distributed to respondents in order to gather the necessary data on reference service offered in Ramat library University of Maiduguri.

The structure of the questionnaire consists of the following sections: section A: respondents’ demographic information. Section B: deals with reference source and reference service variables, the ready reference service, information and referral services, selective dissemination of information, inter- library loan and document delivery and evaluation of reference service. Each variable will contain four (4) questions of which respondents was asked to respond to as: available, not available, uses, Yes” or No’ where appropriate

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

A total number of three hundred and forty-one (341) questionnaires were administered. However, out of the total number of questionnaires administered, three hundred and sixteen (316) questionnaires were filled and returned. The remaining twenty-five (25) questionnaires were missed. Therefore, data collected were analyzed using table, figures and percentages.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

N/S	Socio-demographic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Gender		
	Male	220	64%
	Female	114	36%
	Total	316	100%
2.	Age		
	15-20	39	12.3%
	20-25	144	45.6%
	25-30	97	30.7%
	30 and above	36	11.4%
	Total	316	100%
3.	Level		
	Level-One	105	33.2%
	Level-Two	111	35.1%
	Level-Three	57	18.0%
	Level-Four	38	12.0%
	Level-Five	5	1.6%
	Total	316	100%

Table A which is Demographic characteristics of respondents shows that 202 (64%) of the respondent were male while 114 (36%) were female. In relation to the age range of the respondents, 39 (12.3%) were between 15-20 years, while 144 (45.6%) of the respondents were around 20-25 years and 25-30 years reported 97 (30.7%). While 30 and above had 36 (11.4%). With regard to respondents' level of study. The results revealed that 105 (33.2%) are from level 1. While 111 (35.1%) of the respondents are from level 2. And 57 (18.0%) are from level 3. Similarly, respondents from level 4 recorded 38 (12.0%) and that of level 5, had 5 (1.6%) of the respondents. This indicates that level 2 has the highest number of participants and level 5 was lowest level of participants.

Types of Reference Source Available in Ramat library?

S/N	Reference Sources	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
i.	Encyclopedia	Available	254	80.4%
		Not available	62	19.6%
		Total	316	100%
ii.	Dictionaries	Available	274	86.7%
		Not available	52	13.3%
		Total	316	100%
iii.	Directories	Available	262	82.9%
		Not available	54	17.1%
		Total	316	100%
iv.	Serials	Available	267	84.5%
		Not available	49	55.5%
		Total	316	100%

Table B reveals that 254 (80.4%) of the respondents indicated the availability of encyclopedia at Ramat library, while 62 (19.6%) responded otherwise. Similarly, 274 (86.7%) of the respondents reported the availability of a dictionaries at Ramat library, while 42 (13.3%) reported that they are not agreed that such materials are available. The availability of directories at Ramat library shows 262 (82.9%) of the respondents reported that they are available, while 54 (17.1%) disagreed that they are available. The table further revealed that 267 (84.5%) of the respondents agreed with the availability of service in Ramat library, while 49(55.5%) disagreed. This implies that majority of respondents agreed that most materials are available in Ramat Library University of Maiduguri.

Types of Reference Source that you have frequently uses in Ramat library

S/N	Reference Sources	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
i.	Bibliographies	Uses	268	84.8%
		No respond	48	15.2%
		Total	316	100%
ii.	Dictionaries	Uses	272	86.1%
		No respond	44	13.9%
		Total	316	100%
iii.	Atlases	Uses	255	80.7%
		No respond	61	19.3%
		Total	316	100%
iv.	Gazettes	Uses	279	88.3%
		No respond	37	11.7%
		Total	316	100%

Table C indicated 268 (84.8%) of the respondents used bibliographies at Ramat library. While, 172 (86.1%) were recorded as dictionaries users at Ramat library. Similarly, Atlases had 255 (80.7%) users. While Gazette revealed 37 (11.7%) users. the result further revealed that 268 (84.8%) of respondents believed that Bibliographies are the most frequently used by users in the library while, 48 (15.2%) of respondents indicated that they are not frequently used. Similarly, 272 (86.1%) of respondents indicated frequently uses of dictionaries in the library, while 44 (13.9%) of respondents responded otherwise. On the use of atlases in library, 255 (80.7%) of respondents reported that atlases are frequently used, while 61 (19.3%) of respondents reported non frequently uses of atlases. The table disclosed frequently used of Gazette, as 279 (88.3%) while 37 (11.7%) responded otherwise. This implies that most respondents believed that they frequently utilize such library collection for their academic purposes

Types of Reference Services Offered to User in Ramat library?

S/N	Reference Sources	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
i.	Ready reference services	Available	269	85.1%
		Not available	47	14.9%
		Total	316	100%
ii.	Information and referral service	Available	286	90.5%
		Not available	30	9.5%
		Total	316	100%
iii.	Selective Dissemination information	Available	287	90.8%
		Not available	29	9.2%
		Total	316	100%
iv.	Inter-library loan and document delivery service	Available	273	86.4%
		Not available	43	13.6%
		Total	316	100%

Table: D affirms that 269 (85.1%) of the respondents indicated the availability of ready reference service, while, 47 (14.9%) responded otherwise. On information and referral service, 286 (90.5%) of the respondents agreed with the statement, while 30 (9.5%) disagreed respondents. Similarly, 287 (90.8%) of the respondents reported the availability of Selective Dissemination of information while, 29 (9.2%) were against the statement. The table further revealed the availability of inter-library loan and document delivery service as 273 (86.4%) while 43 (13.6%) of the respondent were disagreed with such service in Ramat library. This revealed that majority of responded testify that reference services is adequately offered by Ramat library University of Maiduguri.

Role of Inter-library Loan and Document Delivery Service in Ramat library

S/N	Inter-Library Loan	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
i.	Does the Ramat library loan offer library loan and document delivery service?	Yes	279	88.3%
		No	37	11.7%
		Total	316	100%
ii.	Does inter-library loan and document delivery provide qualitative service to users?	Yes	281	88.9%
		No	35	11.1%
		Total	316	100%
ii.	Does the Ramat library staff qualified to satisfied users need in inter-library and document delivery service?	Yes	148	47 %
		No	168	53%
		Total	316	100%
iii.	Are you satisfied with service performed in inter library loan and document delivery in Ramat library?	Yes	139	44.1%
		No	177	55.9%
		Total	316	100%

Table E shows that 279 (88.3%) of the respondents responded yes, that Ramat library offered inter-library loan and document delivery as against 37 (11.7%) of the respondents who responded the other way round. Similarly, 281 (88.9%) of the respondents indicated that inter-library loan and document delivery provided qualitative service to users, while 35 (11.1%) responded otherwise. The table also revealed that 168 (53.0%) of the respondents disagreed that Ramat library staff do not assist users need in inter library loan and document delivery service, while 148 (47%) of the respondents were disagreed. In the same vein, 177 (55.9%) of the respondents revealed unsatisfactory state of affair with the service performed in inter-library loan, while 139 (44.1%) of the respondents were satisfied with inter-library loan and document delivery services in the Ramat library. Therefore, this result established that adequate of such services is being offered to users by the library.

Evaluation of Reference Service in Ramat library

S/N	Inter-Library Loan	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
i.	Does the Ramat library have qualified staff in providing reference service to users?	Yes	294	93.0%
		No	22	7.0%
		Total	316	100%
ii.	Does the Ramat library have current reference materials to support effective and efficient reference services	Yes	299	94.6%
		No	17	5.4%
		Total	316	100%
iii.	Does the reference librarian satisfy user in terms of information needs in the Ramat library?	Yes	23	7.3%
		No	293	92.7%
		Total	316	100%
iv.	Does the Ramat library have effective management of available resource?	Yes	17	5.4%
		No	299	94.6%
		Total	316	100%

Table: F reveals that 294 (93.0%) of the respondents agree that Ramat library had qualified staff in providing reference service to users, while 22 (7.0%) disagreed that there are qualified staff in the library. Similarly, 299 (94.6%) of the respondents recorded that Ramat library had current reference materials to support effective reference service, while 17 (5.4%) of the respondents responded otherwise. The result further explained that 293 (92.7%) of the respondents are not satisfied with reference librarian service to user while 23 (7.3%) are satisfied with the reference librarian. Equally, 299 (94.6%) of the respondents answered “No” to effective management of available resource in Ramat library, while 17 (5.4%) of the respondents responded “Yes” to effective management of available resources.

Discussion of Major Findings

The study was conducted to evaluate reference service in Ramat library, University of Maiduguri. The result showed that majority of the respondents agreed that there is availability of reference sources in Ramat library and further revealed dictionaries and Gazettes as the most frequently used reference source in the library.

Similarly, Selective Dissemination of Information Services (SDI) was recorded as the best reference service available in Ramat library, while ready reference service has the lowest service recorded. Moreover, the results revealed that Ramat library inadequate qualified staff to satisfied user in inter-library loan and document delivery service. Lastly the respondents agreed that Ramat library do not have effective management of available resources control.

Summary

This study started with the background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, research questions, significance of the study as well as the scope and lastly the operational definition of terms. Similarly, the study reviewed related literature under the following sub-heading, Evaluation of reference service, types of reference services, types of reference services, types of reference services, Role of inter Library loan and Document Delivery service as well as evaluation of reference services. Furthermore, the study discussed the research methodology, these includes; research design population and sample research instrument procedure for data collection and method of data analysis. The population of this study comprised only registered users in Ramat Library, University of Maiduguri. A sample of three hundred and forty-one (341) was used for the study, questionnaires were used as the research instruments. Procedure for data collection was personal administration of the questionnaire and the analysis used was frequency distribution and percentages.

Conclusion

The study to some extent, has fulfilled the current situation of reference service to the users in the Ramat Library University of Maiduguri. There is need for the collection of current reference materials. This can only be achieved if the University allocate reasonable budget for the acquisition of current editions of reference sources, despite the 10% allocation budget

to the Academic Libraries by the National Universities Commission (NUC). Similarly, there is need to constantly or periodically evaluate the reference services given to users which includes, ready reference services information and referral service as well as selective dissemination of information service.

Recommendation

Base on the findings of this study, the following recommendation are made:

1. The Library should explore other means of generating funds to supplement the library budget in order to sufficiently finance certain services of the library especially the references services aspect.
2. The library should improve ready reference services, where reference librarians should answer users' questions in order to satisfy their needs, and also induce ready reference service to Ramat Library users through selective Dissemination of information services where the library users are informed about latest selected publication on each subject of the study.
3. There should be a constant evaluation of the reference collection. The reference selection should be evaluated to always determine the users need.
4. The University management should employ more qualified staff to handle the reference selection of the library.
5. The University management should restructure the library instruction programme so that emphasis will be laid on practical aspect rather than theoretical aspect.

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