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# EVALUATION OF THE AVAILABILITY AND USE OF INFORMATION RESOURCES AND SERVICES BY SANDWICH STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF LEAD CITY UNIVERSITY, IBADAN, OYO STATE.

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**EVALUATION OF THE AVAILABILITY AND USE OF INFORMATION  
RESOURCES AND SERVICES BY SANDWICH STUDENTS: A CASE STUDY OF  
LEAD CITY UNIVERSITY, IBADAN, OYO STATE.**

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**Abstract**

*Part-time and Distance education is fast gaining global acceptance with millions of enrolments annually. Stakeholders have argued that, just like regular students, those who chose this mode of study deserve the highest quality services available. As a result, Library and Information service providers are seeking to understand this group of users in order to properly meet their information needs and design services that best fit their unique characteristics. The study thus examined the availability and use of Library and Information Services by Part-time, Students at Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria. A self administered questionnaire was used to gather data. The data collected were analyzed using the SPSS for Windows Version 20. Descriptive analysis was performed on the data which yielded percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviation that described the central tendency and sample distribution. The study found that, although they have diverse information needs, part -time students have limited access to the resources and services of the Lead City University Library and majority of them turn to other sources that are easily within reach like the internet. In the light of the findings, the study recommended that libraries should take the advantage of ICT in facilitating remote access to electronic format of books and journals and extend Information literacy services to part-time students.*

**Keywords: Information Needs; Library Services, Distance Education, E-library, Academic libraries, Information Behaviour**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The dire quest for further education in Nigeria has compelled universities and other tertiary institutions to redesign their academic programmes and develop different modes of study such as work-based, vocational and part-time or distance learning. The oldest of these part time programs is the Sandwich program which enables employed teachers and others to study for additional qualifications during leave or break periods.

Although the sandwich form of distance education is becoming increasingly popular in recent times, it is not a recent innovation. According to Adagba (2016), sandwich programs have been in existence in Nigeria since the 1970s as a mean of creating opportunities for serving teachers to acquire higher qualifications in their fields of study in a way that will not adversely affect their duties. Akporido (2014) opined that Sandwich programmes are organized by Nigerian universities with the aim of encouraging working class students, for example, teachers who have the Nigerian Certificate in Education (N.C.E) and other equivalent qualifications, to improve their skills and broaden their knowledge on a part -time basis. The sandwich program has however become more attractive to all segments of the society not only for those in the teaching profession, but for all and sundry, both the odl and the young, the employed and the unemployed have taken up of the opportunity of acquiring higher or additional qualifications through these programs.

According to (Khasseh, Moghaddam and Jowkar, 2009), one of the most essential support systems influencing the quality of the courses offered in distance education is the provision of library and information services and resources. Thus, as universities introduce these modes of study, libraries are also obliged to redesign their information resources and services to effectively serve users enrolled in these programmes. However, research has shown that many academic libraries were found ill-prepared to cater for the needs of the growing number of sandwich and other distance learners registered with their parent institutions because of the peculiar nature of their study with various studies showing that only a small percentage of part-time students make use of their home institution libraries (Liu and Yang, 2004; Dukić & Strišković, 2015; Oladunjoye, Omiunu & Yomi-Owojori, 2018)

Sacchanand (2002), cited in Adetimirin and Omoghen (2011) pointed out that sandwich students are quite different from students in regular university programs. According to Liu and Yang (2004), the major features of sandwich programs include the physical separation of students from their instructors and absence of a learning group during the learning process. Adetimirin and Omoghen (2011) also characterized the sandwich students as adult learners, mature, employed, have family responsibilities, higher motivation and are willing to take responsibility for their own education. In the light of these apparent differences, it is imperative for information service providers to understand the special information needs and trends in information usage by these set of students.

### **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

The critical roles of library services in academic pursuits of students in tertiary institutions, irrespective of the form of admission have been highlighted in various studies (Comiskey & Lockwood, 2016; Nweze, 2010; Khasseh, Moghaddam and Jowkar, 2009). However, studies have shown that distance learners rarely make use of the libraries in their institutions. (Liu and Yang, 2004; Dukić & Strišković, 2015; Oladunjoye, Omiunu & Yomi-Owojori, 2018). This is attributed to library policies and services that are either unsuitable for distance learners or downright discriminatory as well as the tendency of part-time student to adopt the principle of least effort in searching for information.

In view of the increasing number of students enrolling in distance education programmes annually, this study seeks to examine the availability and use of information sources and services by sandwich students at the Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to achieve the following objectives;

- Determine the rate and frequency of library use among sandwich students at Lead City University, Ibadan.
- Identify the major source of information for sandwich students at Lead City University, Ibadan.
- Identify the information needs of respondents at Lead City University, Ibadan..
- Identify the services enjoyed by sandwich students at the lead city university, Ibadan.
- Identify the factors militating against the proper use of the library

- Determine the various services the sandwich students expected from the lead city university library.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The increasing rise in the rate of enrollment into various distance learning programs globally has piqued the interest of information service providers with various studies conducted on the various aspect of distance learners' relationship with the library. These studies are important because academic libraries are expected to play a central role in meeting the information needs of the various user groups through the provision of resources in both print and electronic format. Some of the studies have focused on how frequent do distance learners use the library. Liu & Yang (2004) reported that 28% of part time students affiliated to the Texas A&M University use the institution's libraries. Similarly, Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2016) reported that just 2% of distance learners of the Winneba Study Centre of the University of Education, Winneba, Ghana indicate that they use the library. Adetimirin and Omoghen (2011) reported that majority of distance education students of the University of Ibadan, Nigeria rarely use their institutions' library.

Adetimirin and Omoghen (2011) believe that distance learners, just like regular students, have various information needs that can be met by the library. This is supported by the Commonwealth of Learning report which stated that libraries and librarians are as important to distance learners as they are to regular students (COL, 2003). Yet, studies reveal a disappointing rate of library use among this set of learners. Studies have shown that the factors responsible for this apathy of distance learners towards the library are multifarious. Chief among them is the lack of preparedness among libraries to cater for this unique category of users. Nweze (2010) observed that in distance learning, library access or library resource integration was given very little attention. Heller-Ross (1996) also observed that the planners and executors of distance learning programme do not consider that the library should be part of the planning process. The role of the library is considered as "an afterthought". Reasons adduced for this position include lack of fund, technological limitations, work overload, etc. This has been considered to be a disservice and injustice to the students because if one compares the library support received by on-campus students with

that of distance learners the differences can be regarded as unethical (Oyedipe, Ajiboye and Olanrewaju, 2014).

Khasseh, Moghaddam and Jowkar, (2009) reported that most of the institutions in Iran do not provide sufficient support for distance learning students to pursue their courses successfully. Adetimirin and Omoghen (2011) also reported that at the University of Ibadan, one of the foremost universities in Nigeria and a pacesetter in distance education, distance learners are not allowed to borrow information materials. They can only consult them in the library. Adesoye and Amusa (2010) in a study of two Nigerian Universities also described library services for the sandwich/part-time students of the institutions as “less than adequate and below expectations”. Mcharazo and Olden (1999) cited in Oladokun (2012) reported that distance learners at the Open University of Tanzania complained that public libraries and even some academic libraries in Tanzania did not have the relevant resources to support their coursework.

This scenario where users must be within the four walls of library to access library resources and services was described by Oladokun (2006) as an armchair system which can will only succeed in making the library becoming irrelevant as the emerging new educational system is redefined, reshaped and refocused.

This is in contrast to the situation at the distance teaching institution of Athabasca University, Canada, where student can borrow materials from the library by mail, phone, fax, e-mail, or online. Students have 24-hour access to the Library Information Desk. When the Library is closed, requests for services can be left on voicemail or sent by fax or e-mail. Library staff acknowledges all requests within 24 hours. Materials are normally mailed to students' home addresses with an appropriate return card included for return of the materials to the AU Library (Athabasca University Library, 2007).

Dew (2001) argues that in order to have a successful library program for off campus students, librarians must understand who their students are and what they want. In a study on library use and services by distance learners in three Nigeria universities by Mabawonku (2004), it was found that many of the students attributed their low use of the library to their tight schedules. Murumba (2015) also found that majority of distance learners are employed so they can only dedicate a fraction of their time to their study. This time must be used productively (Boadi and Letsolo, 2004). Besides, most of them have limited contact with academic institutions, and many lack awareness and requisite skills in library use (Murumba, 2015; Oladokun, 2002; Khasseh, Moghaddam and Jowkar, 2009; Adesoye and Amusa,

2010). Therefore, their information search is guided by the principle of least effort (Liu and Yang, 2004).

The fact that distance learners do not consult the library does not mean that they do not search for information. Khasseh, Moghaddam and Jowkar, (2009) reported that despite the assumption that distance learners rely only on their course modules, 89% of Iranian distance learners report using other information sources. According to Liu and Yang (2004) many distance-education students chose other information sources as their primary source instead of their home institution libraries. Oladokun (2002) listed those sources to include course modules/study guides, lecturers' notes, and interaction with peers, friends/colleagues and mass media. Boadi and Letsolo (2004) also added personal collections and family members to this list.

Several researches have shown that distance learners prefer information sources that are accessible remotely which they can access whenever and wherever they chose. (Kimberly and Gloria, 2003; Murumba, 2015; Liu and Yang, 2004; Dukić & Strišković, 2015; Oladunjoye, Omiunu & Yomi-Owojori, 2018). Liu and Yang (2004) found that “respondents favored timely and easy online information retrieval over the information seeking associated with a physical information source.”

In view of the heavy reliance of distance learners on the internet as a major source of information, Nwezeh (2010) wondered whether the library has any role to play in distance education. However, Oladokun (2002) and Liu & Yang (2004) expressed their discomfort with students relying solely on public libraries and the internet on the premises that the public libraries may be inadequate while the users may not possess the information literacy skills require to evaluate information acquired from the internet. Dukić & Strišković (2015) opines that for the effective use of electronic resources, students must acquire the necessary information literacy skills.

Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2016) therefore advocate that distance learners should be made to see the imperative of using the academic library because the carefully selected and organized collection of the library promotes the acquisition of reading, inquiry and independent thinking through the provision of resources to support learning activities. They also backed the assertion by citing Kavulya (2004) who contends that “a degree without an in depth knowledge of the subject through investigative learning is questionable”.

But it is not enough to encourage the distance learners to use the library. As pointed out by Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2016) distance education is learner - centered because the individual chooses the place of study; learns in a variety of ways and takes control of his

learning, therefore, the information services targeted at these category of users must be tailored to fit their needs and information seeking behaviour.

According to Gopakumar and Baradol (2009), suitable services to distance learners include;

- Library websites as a service point
- Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)
- Document delivery through regional study centres
- Electronic reference
- Access to e-journals
- E-Reserve
- Information literacy
- Online reference sources.

Ofodu and Agim (2017) hinge the success of library services provision to distance learners on the provision of digital library services. She argues that; everything connected to open and distance education is based on online delivery and for the benefit of the distance learners, the library, its resources, facilities and services should be made virtual for easy dissemination and retrieval. This implies that academic libraries can meet their distance-education students' information needs by increasing online resources and services and making them readily available to their distance-education students through better and more accessible library information systems and more effective library instruction and promotion programs. (Liu & Yang, 2004)

According to Kim (2006), offering web based services is important, not only for the library users, but also for the continuing relevance of the library because competing with unregulated but easily accessible contents on the open internet. She opines that; “to compete with open Internet searches and facilitate use of Web-based subscription databases, it is crucial for libraries to increase the convenience of access and awareness of the existence of the databases.

This is already happening as Murumba (2015) reported that Kenyan academic libraries are making headway in service provision to distance learners through the creation of institutional repositories where research papers were available to distance learners, training users on basic computer skills enabling them to use digital resources effectively; as well as collaboration during information repackaging between faculty, ICT staff and Distance education officials.

Media and information literacy is also considered essential by Ogunmodede, Adio & Adeola (2011) because it enables the students to evaluate information and its sources. This training,



according to Ren (2000) must be targeted at all students as he reported that on average, students reacted positively toward acquiring information search skills. If the training is effective, students will chose a library source over any other source any day. The only condition is that it is easily accessible.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted using questionnaires which were distributed among 250 Sandwich students of Lead City University, Ibadan. Administration of the questionnaire was aided by the assistance of the coordinators of sandwich program in the institution. This ensured that majority of the respondents filled and returned the questionnaire. 200 of the returned questionnaires were found adequately completed enough to be included for analysis. The data collected were analyzed using the SPSS for Windows Version 20. Descriptive analysis was performed on the data which yielded percentages, frequencies, means, and standard deviation that described the central tendency and sample distribution.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

**Table 1: Age Distribution**

<b>Year Range</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
20-30	8	4
31-40	52	26
41-50	100	50
51 and above	36	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>196</b>	<b>98</b>

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents are between the age range of 31-40 (26%), 41 – 50 (50%) and above 50 years (20%) while those in their 20s constitute 4% of the total respondents. This finding is in agreement with that of Larson & Owusu-Acheaw (2016) which found that majority of distance learners are matured students and the assertion of Sacchanand (2002) that distance learners are adult learners, mature and employed.

**Table 2: Employment Status**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Government Schools	86	43.0	44.6	44.6
Private Schools	63	31.5	32.6	77.2
Self Employed	8	4.0	4.1	81.3
Unemployed	36	18.0	18.7	100.0
Total	193	96.5	100.0	
Missing	7	3.5		
	200	100.0		

The responses indicate that the number of respondents in government schools is the highest with 43%. This is closely followed by 31.5% of the respondent who claim to work for private school. 18% of the respondents are not currently employed while the remaining 4% are self employed. Again, this response fit the profile of the average distance learner as matured and employed. (Sacchanand, 2002)

**Table 3: Major Source of Information of Respondents**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Lead city library	16	8.0	8.0	8.0
Course module	48	24.0	24.0	32.0
Internet	84	42.0	42.0	74.0
Personal library	44	22.0	22.0	96.0
Public library	8	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

When responding to the question, “which of the following is your major source of academic information”, 42% of the respondents indicate that they get their information from the internet. This is followed by 24% of the respondents who rely on their course modules for information while 22% indicate that they use their personal libraries consisting of books they purchased themselves or borrow from friends, colleagues and family members. Just 8% of the respondents indicate the Lead City University library as their major source of information while 4% indicate that the public library is their major source of information. This outcome tallies with the findings of Liu & Yang (2004) as well as Thompson (2007) both of which found low patronage of academic libraries and great reliance on the internet and course modules among distance learners.

**Table 4: Frequency of Library Use**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Daily	7	3.5	3.5	3.5
Weekly	50	25.0	25.0	28.5
Monthly	71	35.5	35.5	64.0
Rarely	72	36	31	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 above shows the frequency of library use among the respondents. 72 (36%) of the respondents indicates that they rarely use the library while 71(35.5%) indicate that they use the library monthly and another 25% indicate that they use the library week. The ‘weekly’ and ‘monthly’ library use is compatible with the frequency of contact between the sandwich students and their tutors. The respondents who indicate that they use the library ‘daily’ are 7 (3.5%). They probably chose this response to indicate that they use the library every time they attend classes.

**Table 5: Services Available To Sandwich Students**

	AV		N. AV		AV N. ACC		N. AW		Mean	S. D
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
Reference services	186	93	-	-	1	.5	12	6	3.80	.743
Access to print resources	174	87	-	-	-	-	26	13	3.59	1.028
Serial services	162	81	6	3	-	-	32	16	3.47	1.116
E-library services	-	-	-	-	172	86	24	12	2.75	.659
Loan facilities	-	-	-	-	174	87	26	13	2.73	.685
User education	1	.5	89	44.5	17	8.5	93	46.5	1.63	.660

Data from Table 5 above shows the services that the lead city university library renders to sandwich students. Reference services tops the list with a mean score of 3.80 followed by Access to print resources with a mean score of 3.59 and serial services which has a mean score of 3.47 on the table. This shows that all printed materials are available to the students provided that they consulted them within the library. This is indicated by the mean score for Loan facilities which is 2.73 as 87% of the respondent reported that loan facilities are available to others but not accessible by sandwich students. It is also clear that sandwich

students do not enjoy e-library services as they do not have the passwords needed to access the library internet and consequently academic databases subscribed to by the library. User education has the least mean score as majority of the respondent are either unaware of its existence or indicate that it is being rendered to sandwich students. This scenario is similar to findings in other studies such as Adetimirin and Omoghen (2011), Nweze (2010) and Mabawonku (2004), among others.

**Table 6: FACTORS AFFECTING LIBRARY USE**

	N	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
No remote access	196	98.0	2.00	.000
Lack of time	190	95.0	1.95	.209
Inadequate library skills	153	76.5	1.76	.425
No loan facilities	150	75.0	1.75	.434
Everything I need is online	112	56	1.56	.498

Responding to the reasons behind their non-use of the university library, the major reason cited was the ‘No remote access’ which was cited by 98% of the respondents. ‘Lack of time’ is also a significant factor as indicated by the response of 95% of the respondents. The third major important factor is ‘Inadequate library skills’ cited by 76.5% of the respondents This is consistent with the findings of Khasseh, Moghaddam and Jowkar, (2009) as well as Mabawonku (2004). It is interesting to note that ‘Everything I need is online’ received the lowest response; 56%. This shows that although various studies (Liu and Yang, 2004; Dukić & Strišković ,2015; Oladokun, 2002) shows that distance learners are turning to the internet, they would rather preferred the highly organized and relevant materials available in the library.

**Table 7: INFORMATION NEEDS OF RESPONDENTS**

	N	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Academic support	197	763	3.87	.349
Current awareness	193	622	3.22	.575
Career/job opportunities	195	599	3.07	.828
Self-development and problem solving	191	541	2.83	.854
Entertainment and recreation	193	466	2.41	1.018

From the table above, it is clear that information needs of the respondents are diverse. However, the major information need indicated by the respondents is for ‘Academic support’ which has a mean of 3.87. This is followed by information for ‘Current awareness’ which has a mean of 3.22. Information on ‘Career and job opportunities’ came third with a mean of 3.07. This is not surprising because many of the respondents would naturally expect a boost in their careers on a better paying job after obtaining additional information. Information on ‘Self Development and Problem Solving’ is also significant with a mean score of 2.83 while information on ‘Entertainment and Recreation’ is of the least concern to the respondent with a mean score of 2.41. This diverse information needs among distance learners was also found by Larson & Owusu-Acheaw (2016) who also reported a high preference for information related to their studies among Ghanaian distance learners.

**Table 8: Preferred Information Services from the Library**

	VI		I		SI		NI		Mean	SD
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
List of relevant web sites for each course	151	75.5	47	23.5	2	1.0	-	-	3.75	.459
Online access to digital versions of books	155	77.5	37	18.5	8	4.0	-	-	3.74	.526
Electronic transfer of needed resources by e-mail	132	66.0	61	30.5	6	3.0	1	.5	3.62	.572
Online access to academic databases	104	52.0	88	44.0	8	4.0	-	-	3.48	.576
Access to the Lead City libraries	95	47.5	89	44.5	14	7.0	-	-	3.41	.621
Provision of Indexes on relevant course materials	77	38.5	95	47.5	17	8.5	10	5.0	3.20	.798
Helpful staff	86	43	80	40	21	10.5	13	6.5	3.20	.872
Information and Media Literacy Training	77	38.5	94	47.0	14	7.0	10	5.0	3.17	.855
Library helpdesk service for inquiries by phone/mail	61	30.5	89	44.5	41	20.5	9	4.5	3.01	.833

The final section of the questionnaire asked the respondents to indicate the service they would like the library to render for them. The most significant request is the library should provide a ‘List of relevant website for each course’ (Mean = 3.75). This is instructive. The

students are trying to leverage on the expertise of librarians in navigating the chaos of the internet. It shows their faith in librarians as source of relevant information. This is reinforced by the other services requested such as Online access to digital version of books (mean = 3.74), 'electronic transfer of needed resource by e-mail' (mean= 3.62) and 'Online access to academic databases' (mean =3.48). Full access to the services of the library is also considered 'Very important' by 47.5% and 'Important' by 44.5% of the respondents (mean= 3.41). A significant number of the respondents also consider the 'Provision of Indexes on relevant course materials' to be helpful (mean = 3.20) have a Library helpdesk that can handle inquiries through telephone or electronic mail. This request has the same mean ranking as the need for 'Helpful staff'. Respondents also request for media and information literacy training (Mean = 3.17) while 'Library helpdesk for inquiries by telephone and e-mail' ranked the least with a mean score of 3.01. It is obvious through this that the respondents want the library to leverage on the available technology and extend its services to them in a manner that is fast, convenient and reliable.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study has revealed a serious disconnect between sandwich students and the library. Although many of the students have information needs that can be best served by the library, they often chose the internet and other sources over the library mainly due to distance and lack of awareness about basic library services. The few who choose to use the library are usually restricted to reading their own books and other relevant textbooks. They are barred from using services such as internet access and online databases that could enrich their learning. This group of users can only spend limited time in the library, yet they cannot borrow books and other material to be used at a convenient time neither can they have remote access to academic databases despite the fact that it is the most suitable approach for them.

Ironically, many of them lack the necessary information literacy skills to efficiently rely on the open internet as their major source of information and would prefer the professional assistance from librarians provided it can be done online to solve the distance problem. The findings show that if the library can design an effective means of getting information resource to them, they will prefer it to 'fending' for themselves on the internet.

It is therefore imperative for libraries and academic institutions to come up with the right policies and structures to deliver the needed library services to the sandwich students in a fast and easily accessible manner.

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