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Original Research

INFORMATION AND DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGES ON UTILIZATION OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARY RESOURCES BY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS OF NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA, OWERRI STUDY CENTRE

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Abstract
This study investigated the influence of information and directional signages on utilization of university library resources by postgraduate students of national open university, Nigeria, Owerri study centre is not adequately documented. It adopted the survey research design, census method of sampling techniques to ensuring that every postgraduate student studied was captured. Self-constructed and validated questionnaire was used to collect data for this study. The findings of the study revealed that informational and directional signages on utilization of library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre were significant. These implies that informational and directional signages significantly influence utilization of library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre. This study recommended that the University Management and University Librarian should ensure that signs should contain clear and precise informational and directional signages should conform to the arrangement of materials on the shelf units to avoid confusion and frustration in accessing information and other library services, and also ensure that library signage constitutes orientation content for freshers, this will help them to be acquainted with informational and directional signs in university libraries. Again, the University librarian should use signages to create more awareness of library rules and regulations and penalties attached to breaching the rules and regulations. This will help to reduce mutilation, theft and other forms of crime and misbehaviour in university libraries.

Keywords: Information Signage, Directional Signage, Utilization, University Library, Library Resources, Postgraduate Students

INTRODUCTION
Signage is the signs and displays used to convey information, directions, warnings and advertisements to people in a particular area. It is a powerful communication medium that encompasses visual, auditory and textual cues that help users navigate their way around a building or a space. Library signage can be sorted into two ways, considering their shapes and

usage. In terms of its shape, there are linear and side models of signage. The linear models are based on non-selective pathways, and focus more on the process of access rather than the destination. The side models of signage are pathway selective, focusing mainly on the destination itself.

According to Emmanuel (2020), library signage is a living document, and must adapt and change as the library does. Librarians undertake responsibilities around designing signage, brochures, information handout, web pages, and promotional and instructional documents everyday as part of their jobs. Hence, librarians are in the business of graphic design, even if they have not been formally trained in design (Wakimoto, 2015). According to Okon and Okwu (2019), Library signage is one of the many touch points which a library user needs to navigate through the library confidently and independently. Lack of signage however, can trigger library anxiety which describes the feelings of fear, uncertainty, and worry when visiting the library.

Emmanuel (2020) states that informational signage helps to answer certain questions such as; what are the hours of operation? Is the public Wi-Fi available? All these and more can be supplied to visitors though informational signage. Informational signage can be found at locations marked by identification signs, and can also provide other information about other things along the route. Directional guide is a signage that provides information to help library users find their way around the library. This includes holidays, closing signs, rest rooms, copier signs and many other directional signages at the university library. Emmanuel (2020) asserts that when one is designing directional guide, one should be consistent with nomenclature such as names for department and destinations.

The University library which is usually referred to as the heart of an institution remains the institution's hope for sound and qualitative education, Duru and Okon (2014) describe the university library as a large reservoir of knowledge from which social, cultural, economic and technical information can be retrieved. According to Nworie, Unegbu and Opara (2022), university libraries constitute a strand in the university. It is the nucleus where all academic activities of the university revolve. It plays an indispensable role in the fulfilment of the functions of an academic community. Library resources are the totality of information resources that form a library collection. The resources are acquired to satisfy the information needs of the library users and accomplish the objectives of the parent institution. The essence of university libraries is to provide information, resources that support teaching, learning and improve user's academic performance (Ndulaka and Uhegbu, 2024). According to Ndulaka and Uhegbu (2024), information resources include all forms of information carriers that can be used to promote and encourage effective research activities and developmental projects.

Postgraduate students are students who have finished their bachelor degree or higher national diploma programme and are undergoing studies for more advanced programme. The postgraduate students include students who are running programmes in postgraduate diploma, master degree programmes, PhD programmes and post-doctoral degree programmes. Informational and directional signage are indispensable tools in facilitating the utilization of university library resources. Library signage is there to help users to use the university library resources which could be anything for assisting a user in navigating the collection, to explaining how to use a self-check loans machine. In the light of above background, this study therefore, seeks to investigate informational and directional signage on utilization of university

library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University, Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre.

Research Questions

The following research questions are formulated to guide the study.

i. What is the influence of informational signage on utilization of library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centr?

ii. What is the influence of directional signage on utilization of library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Utilization is a term that qualifies the action of making practical and effective use of something. To use means to apply, employ or practice something with the aid of benefiting from it. Uhegbu (2007) posits that utilization is the actual putting into appropriate use of something. It is the process of making use of something available. Utilization differs from person to person and from one corporate organization to another according to their information needs and other social-economic imperatives. According to Uhegbu (2007), utilization is governed by several a principle among which is goal identification. Therefore, information utilization is the act of applying information on the actual purpose for which it is sought. Information can be sought by a user to satisfy personal needs or sought by a user to create knowledge. Utilization of information resources is the extent to which the resources and services of the library are actually used for teaching, learning and research. The extent to which information resources are utilized in academic libraries is usually captured by the library statistics which is compiled on daily basis by the library staff. It therefore, becomes pertinent that in order to gauge the extent to which library resources are utilized, the library staff must be proactive in providing statistics of usage on daily basis. This will serve as encouragement or otherwise to the sponsors of the library (Ozioko, Nwabueze and Eze, 2012). Information utilization focuses on what people in a range of contexts do with information that they seek out or have provided to them. The popular maxim, 'you are either informed or deformed' greatly captures the importance of information to mankind. Information is the pivot or the fulcrum around which the economic, social, industrial, political and technological development of any nation revolves. Certainly, no individual or nation can develop without making effective use of information (Emenyonu and Unegbu, 2022). Academic libraries are left with no option or choice but to provide access to relevant information resources by applying this to enable quick access, integrate, and repackage information for the end user that will capacitate and enrich higher educational institutions' means of conducting research. Basically, library resources are materials that users consult in making decisions and also for problem-solving. Libraries have always played a significant role in enabling people to engage with all kinds of information and available knowledge resources (Curran, Murray, Norrby and Christian, 2006). However, availability of information does not imply accessibility and utilization; thus, university libraries must provide informational signage to aid in the utilization of available library information.

Informational signage in academic libraries enhances accessibility and utilization of library resources because it provides necessary information for library users to use appropriate data. Ugah (2007) opines that the more accessible information resources are, the more likely

they will be used, and readers tend to use resources that require the minimum effort to access. Informational signage saves students' time and reduces the level of stress and challenge associated with locating the material of interest. According to Ochogwu (2007), this is due to the failure of our library professionals to provide complete access to those information resources due to a lack of informational signs related to indexing, abstracting, and bibliographic. Dwight (2008) postulates that informational signs help to answer certain questions such as what are the hours of operation, is public Wi-Fi available? All this and more can be supplied to visitors through informational signs. While informational signs can be found at locations marked by identification signs, they can also provide information about other things along the route. For instance, if an area is under construction, it'd be nice to give a little head's up to anyone in sandals that the road might get a little rocky. If a way is temporarily closed, that's also good to know ahead of time. Ahn (2011) maintains that informational role of library signs permits or restrict certain behaviors of users help them find their destinations. An information sign is a very legibly printed and very noticeable placard that informs people of the purpose of an object, or gives them instruction on the use of something. An example is a traffic sign such as a stop sign. Information signs have been growing in visibility due to the explosion of sign technologies. For hundreds, if not thousands, of years signs were crafted out of wood. Words and images were then hand-painted on the sign. The other traditional way of creating signs dealt with individual constructed letters carved from wood, moulded or wrought from metal, which were then individually placed in the appropriate sequence. While both of these methods are still employed, technology has moved in around them.

Directional signage is one of the key services provided in the academic libraries. Dwight (2008) avers that when it comes to pointing the way, the directional or way finding signs are the sign for the job. When using directional signage, the best rule to follow is to keep it simple. When planning a way-finding system, try to plan it as early in the overall planning stage as possible. Unfortunately, way-finding plans often get left to the end, and don't receive the attention they deserve. Directional signs don't appear at the location, they appear around the location and on the way to the location. Directional signs need to be hidden in plain sight. They should appear at junctions, or anywhere a person on a way to a location might look to see which way to get to that location. Directional signs are also what turn a group of many individuals into a singular crowd. Airports, for instance, aren't made for standing around; they're made for transit. Directional signs keep people moving where they shouldn't be standing still. So, someone follows the directional signs until they find the identification sign. When they find that, they'll need an informational sign to know a little more. For many years, academic libraries have taken for granted that their client (students) know where everything is located in the facility (Emmanuel, 2020). Now with increased students' turnover and visits from lecturers and other new comers, libraries want their facilities to look like airports. Their goals are to allow someone who has never entered their facility to be able to navigate to any department or section and retrieve information without asking a single question (visual work place). These processes can only be achieved by placing a clear and concise directional guide in the library. Directional guide is a signage that provide information to help library users find their way around the library. These include holidays, closing signs, rest room, copier signs and many others signage at the library (San Jose Public Library, 2009).

Okwu and Okon (2019) observe that when not given adequate directional cues, disorientation will hinder wayfinding performance. The use of signage is an important strategy that can be utilized to improve students' wayfinding and therefore develop spatial orientation abilities in academic libraries. Directional guide enables new and frequent students navigate quickly to their destination, clearly organized with a very little text. Directional signage is to identify and direct a user to their desired destination. This should take place easily and effectively so that the signage does not generate confusion, frustration, or cause pedestrian traffic problems, the signs should be easily recognizable from its background, text should be easily read with good colour contrast and size in relation to its intended viewing distances, provide clear, concise and easy to understand information. Minimal text with the use of graphic symbols to convey the message efficiently. Okwu and Okon (2019) further contend that directional signs help to guide students and visitors to their final destination by indicating the route to that destination. Directional signage is usually located at the key decision-making areas. However, Jansen-Osmann and Wiedenbauer (2004) assert that directional signs can be overhead signs or wall- mounted signs. Overhead directional signs may use upper- and lower-case letters/ characters with a minimum 3"cap height. Minimum 80" clearance below the bottom of the sign. Usually mounted to the ceiling within hallway at key decision points. Directional signs must be installed where they can be approached closely enough to be read by a visually impaired person.

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METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study using questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The questionnaire is titled "informational and directional signage on utilization of university library resources questionnaire" **(IDSUULRQ)**. A total of three hundred and seventy-eight (378) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to postgraduate students of National Open University, Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre. This comprises 225 postgraduate diploma students and 153 masters' degree students. Out of these,

two hundred and sixty-eight (268) copies of the questionnaire were duly completed and returned for analysis giving a response rate of (70.9%). Seventeen (110) copies of the questionnaire were non-response giving a non-response rate of (29.1%). The return rate of 268 (70.9%) is adequate representation of the entire population. No sample size was drawn from the population. This is because the population of the study is accessible. The census method was used to ensuring that opinions of all the postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre were captured for the study.

ANALYSIS

Research Question 1

i. What is the influence of informational signage on utilization of library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre?

Table 1: Mean Responses on Influence of Informational Signage on Utilization of Library Resources

1	**Information Signage on Utilization of Library Resources**	**SA**	**A**	**D**	**SD**	**Total**	**Mean X**	**Decision**
a	Informational signage answers certain questions on how I can locate and utilize resources in the library	140	98	20	10	268	3.37	Not Significant
b	Information signage provides all the basic information that helps me in utilizing library resources correctly	158	100	5	5	268	3.53	Significant
c	Information signage serves as a tool for me to discern various books, service points and facilities in the course of utilizing library resources	147	97	10	14	268	3.41	Not Significant
d	Information signage helps me identify library resources according to their class and category	162	98	4	4	268	3.56	Significant
e	Information signage helps utilize the appropriate data tools in the library	149	108	9	2	268	3.51	Significant
	Significant Mean Value						**3.48**	

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Result on Table 1, indicates that at a significant mean value of 3.48, information signage provides all the basic information that helps me in utilizing library resources correctly (X=3.53), information signage helps me identify library resources according to their class and category (X=3.56) and also, information signage helps utilize the appropriate data tools in the library (X=3.51). Although, other informational signage on the utilization of library resources by postgraduate students such as informational signage answers certain questions on how I can locate and utilize resources in the library (X=3.37) and information signage serves as a tool for me to discern various books, service points and facilities in the course of utilizing library resources (X=3.41) are considered insignificant influence because their mean values were less than the significant mean values of 3.48.

Research Question 2

ii. What is the influence of directional signage on utilization of library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre?

Table 2: Mean Responses on Influence of Directional Signage on the Utilization of Library Resources

2	Directional Signage on Utilization of Library Resources	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean X	Decision
a	Directional signage helps me get to the relevant resources I need to use on time	157	103	5	3	268	3.54	Not Significant
b	I get to the desired location of resources without wandering around	162	95	8	3	268	3.55	Not Significant
c	Directional guide boosts my confidence and comfort because I can find my way round the library without getting lost or confused	196	58	10	4	268	3.66	Significant
d	It aids me to navigate in the library with little or no help	171	92	3	2	268	3.61	Significant
e	It guides me to the important facilities thereby making retrieval and usage of resources easier and stress free	181	79	5	3	268	3.63	Significant
	Significant Mean Value						**3.60**	

(Source: Field Survey, 2025)

Table 2 shows the mean responses on influence of directional signage on utilization of library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre is greater than the significant mean value (X=3.60) in three main aspects. These are; directional guide boosts my confidence and comfort because I can find my way round the library without getting lost or confused (X=3.66), it aids me to navigate in the library with little or no help (X=3.61) and it guides me to the important facilities thereby making (X=3.63). The other two reasons namely; directional signage helps me get to the relevant resources I need to use on time (X=3.54) and I get to the desired location of resources without wandering around (X=3.55) have less than the significant mean value (X=3.60). The significant mean value (X=3.60) shows that directional signage has positive influence on utilization of library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre.

FINDINGS

The findings of the study on Table 1, research question 1 revealed that informational signage on utilization of library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre was significant. This implies that informational signage significantly influences utilization of library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre. This finding agrees with Smart (2021) who maintains that informational signage gives information. It provides knowledge of how what one requires could be seen. Informational signage in university libraries serve as a guide to direct students to where they should locate any material needed. Barclay and Scott (2012) agreed that informational signage tells building users where they are and what they can (or cannot) do. Ahn (2011) supported that the signage plays a role as indicating information. Information signage provides all basic information to library users, it is a tool to discern various books, service points and facilities. However, Ahn (2011) observed that delivering messages in signs should be simple and straight forward. This result is also in line with Dwight (2008) who postulated that informational signage helps to answer certain questions such as what are the hours of operation, is public Wi-Fi available? All this and more can be supplied to visitors through informational signage. While informational signs can be found at locations marked by identification signs, they can also provide information about other things along the route. information signage contains necessary information for library users to use appropriate data, tools and facilities of library. The signage includes administrators' intentions, general information, restrictions, opening hours, titles of facilities and exhibitions, handling descriptions and operational manuals.

The result of findings in Table 2 showed that all the identified items on directional signage predicts utilization of library resources by postgraduate students of National Open University of Nigeria, Owerri Study Centre. The reason for the result is because directional signage is a sign that provides information to help library users find their way around the library. The result is in agreement with Okon and Okwu (2019) who postulated that the presence of directional guide in university library help to reduce noise and traffic at the pedestrian, creating free movement from one section of the university library to the other.

CONCLUSION

Informational and directional signages enhance independent and critical thinking thereby helping the university library to learning resources through the use of users to use the appropriate data, tools and facilities of the university library for effective retrieval the needed information. Improves access to learning resources through the use of signs is an important general strategy for all libraries especially the university library where students are still learning about the organizational structure of the library.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

1. University Librarian should ensure that signs should contain clear and precise informational and directional signages should conform to the arrangement of materials on the shelf units to avoid confusion and frustration in accessing information and other library services.
2. University Management should ensure that library signage constitutes orientation content for freshers, this will help them to be acquainted with informational and directional signs in university libraries.
3. University librarian should use signages to create more awareness of library rules and regulations and penalties attached to breaching the rules and regulations. This will help to reduce mutilation, theft and other forms of crime and misbehaviour in university libraries.

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