

**Effect of user education on law students' use of the library: A case of the faculty of law library, Imo state university, Owerri, Nigeria**

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**Blessing Solomom Uwakwe**

*Imo State University Owerri*

**Cajetan O. Onyeneke**

*Imo State University Owerri*

**Immaculatta Ngozi Njoku**

*Imo State University, Owerri.*

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of user education on the law students' use of the library : A case study of the faculty law library Imo State University Owerri. The survey research design was used for the study while questionnaire instrument was used for data collection. The population of the study consists of all the registered users of faculty of law library. Six research questions were answered and the analysis was done using mean scores. The findings of the study reveal that Imo State University law students have understanding of the concept of user education. The study also finds out that user education programme has positively affected the law students use of the library and their academic performance. The study identified some problems that hinder effective user education as over population, lack of infrastructure, inadequate and trained personnel, lack of instructional materials,, limited time allocated to the programme, unconducive environment and inadequate space. The study concludes that since the library occupies a central place in the achievement of educational objectives of law students, and this has made user education indispensable in the library, adequate resources should be committed to the programme to ensure that its objectives are realized Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made on how to remedy the problems.

**Introduction**

Libraries are made for use. This justifies the large investment of its human and material resources, as well as library's organizational structures and systems. Describing library use, Ama and Chikiezie, in Maduako (2013) pointed

out that it is the act of perusing the library stock, seeking and obtaining assistance from library staff, finding information and borrowing a book from library. It also includes studying one's own material in the library. Thus all the activities carried out in the library by the

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user, whether assisted or otherwise, to meet his or her information needs may be described as library use.

To a large extent, library use measures the effectiveness and efficiency of library resources and defines/informs the fundamental policy objectives of libraries. Ogunmedede and Emeahara (2010) observe that no matter how large the stock of a library is, if the services and its resources are not fully utilized, such a library will be a white elephant project. This underscores the proper planning, design of the facilities as well as adoption of library policies and programmes with the aim of ensuring proper and effective use of the libraries.

One of these programmes is known as user education. User education is a process whereby potential users of the library are made to learn how to make efficient and effective use of the library and its resources through the acquisition of knowledge and skills in identification, location, retrieval and exploitation of information (Iheaturu 2012). User education can be in the form of orientation/training programmes, workshop, seminar, “know your library programmes” occasionally organized by

the library for both new and old library users. These programmes/activities may be packaged in hard copies, i.e. manuals, handouts or in soft copies i.e. compact disc. The fundamental objective of user education is to expose, acquaint and inculcate in the clients, the basic knowledge or understanding and skills which are necessary for effective and efficient use of the library services and resource.

The advent and advancement of technology as well as the development of computer systems, have given rise to unprecedented increase in volumes of published materials, both in print and non print forms and compelled modern libraries and the librarianship profession to pursue and adopt new age tools and methodologies in the discharge of its activities. For instance, libraries have embraced the digital age and adopted several electronic methods and devices in the discharge of library services. They include: the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) used for online search and cataloguing, Internet devices also used for information/data search and browsing, e-mail devices used for library registration, browsing etc.

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The adoption and implementation of these new age tools and technologies obviously place on library service providers the responsibility of carrying library use along through the design/packaging of quality user education programme to enable library clients to acquire effective and efficient access and utilization of library services. The quality of user education programme determines the rate of use of any library and also actualizes the sustainable optimal user satisfaction. The corollary to this is that a poorly packed user education may account for low rate of use of library resources and services, which equally runs counter to the user satisfaction policy of the library.

The effectiveness of any library is measured by the use made of its resources and services. This justifies all the efforts librarians put in, in organizing library resources so that they can be fully utilized. One of such efforts is the instruction given to library patrons to acquaint them with the library, its resources and services with a view to enabling them retrieve needed information without difficulty. Studies have shown that many students do not

use the library. Some of them are not even aware of the existing information materials in the library. Those who use the library find it difficult locating needed materials because they lack the knowledge of the search tools which would help them locate information materials needed. Consequently, the library resources are under utilized and this seems to account for students inability to do meaningful research which ultimately results in poor academic performance.

This has become an issue of concern, thus this study is carried out to determine the effect of user education on the law studies utilization of the resources of faculty of law library, Imo State University, Owerri.

### **Background to the study**

Imo State University was established in 1992 following states creation in 1991. At the inception of the university, college of legal studies, as was called then, was established in 2001/2002. In keeping with the decision of the university senate the university change from college system to faculty system and consequently college of legal studies changed to faculty of law.

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(Students' handbook, Faculty of Law 2012).

At the inception of the faculty of law, a library was established to support the academic programme of the faculty which is teaching, learning and research. The law library is saddled with the responsibility of providing legal information materials, making them available and accessible to law students and faculty members. To actualized this, law library acquires, processes, preserves, and disseminates resources such as books, journals, law reports, law journals, bound preiodicals, government publications etc.

The law library also has E-library and internet connections with high bandwidth access. According to the recent library statistics, the faculty of law library has about 200 registered users. The law students and the faculty members depend heavily on relevant library materials to meet their information needs. To assist the users, law librarian gives instruction on library use regularly to teach them on the techniques of library use. Also in the university curriculum, a course on use of library is taught as part of general studies programme for fresh students.

All these are efforts and strategies designed to educate the library patron on how to effectively utilize the library resources and services.

This study is therefore intended to examine the effect of user education on the utilization of the resources and services of faculty of law library, Imo State University, Owerri.

### **Research question**

The study was conducted to answer the following research questions

- what is the law students' understanding of the concept of library user education as a course.?
- What is the course content of user education programme the law students were exposed to?
- What is the effect of user education programme on law students?.
- What are the methods implored in teaching user education?
- What is the law students' perception of user education programme?
- what are the problems that hinder effective library user education programme in the faculty?

### **Literature review**

Various terminologies have been used to discuss ways of teaching library patrons how to use the library resources. Some of these terms are user education, bibliographic instruction, user instruction, information literacy, library orientation etc. These terms are used interchangeably to describe formal and informal library programmes on how to maximally utilize library resources (Akalum, 2006). This is useful to make library users acquire necessary skills required to make them competent library users. Several literatures abound by different scholars and writers on the concept of user education in librarianship. Maduako (2013) defines user education as a planned process and techniques that is aimed at equipping library users with the basic skills to help them make optimal use of the resources available in their library. Iheaturu (2012) corroborating this defines user education as a process whereby potential users of information are made to learn how to make effective and efficient use of the library and its resources through acquisition, location, retrieval and exploitation of information. It is any effort or programme which will guide

and instruct existing and potential users individually or collectively with the objective of facilitating the recognition of their information need, effective and efficient use of information services and the assessment of these services (Sujatha, 1993.) User education consists of all types of activities designed to teach users about library facilities, services, organization, resources and search strategies in order to equip them with basic skills to enable them make optimal, effective, efficient and independent use of information resources and services available in the library (Akimbola, Ogunmede & Emahara: 2010).

The indispensability of user education as instrument for effective utilization of library resources is not in question. This is because the extent to which the library resources are used depend largely on users' skill and knowledge of information search and retrieval. Esse and Ugwumba (2014) are of the opinion that there cannot be a connection between user and materials or tools without proper education given to users who may not have prior knowledge or idea on the use of such materials or tools. Onyesikuru (2000)

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notes that effective use of library is expected to be one of the principal objectives of establishing libraries. He insists that for this to be achieved, librarians must instruct the students on how to use the library; they have to familiarize them with the technique of library use and information retrieval. Esse quoting Ishola (2005) avers that the need for user education has become more urgent as most students come into the university without background. He noted that even where students are probably exposed to the use of the library, the size of the library resources and the organization are complex so they must be introduced to it. Jain (2006) opines that increase in data base in various disciplines has made the need for user education imperative. Moreover, the use of ICT in library operations and services has also expanded the demand to train the users on how to access needed information. Aligu (2011) states that changes brought about by the use of ICT facilities in storing, retrieving and dissemination of information poses challenges on the library users hence the need to instruct them on how well to use them to retrieve information. He insists that the application of ICT into library

system demand from an exposure to ICT facilities and be taught on how to use them.

User education is not taught in a vacuum. There are goals and objectives guiding the programme which must be pursued and realized. Iheaturu in Edom (2007) outline the following as the objective of user education. Teach the children how to make efficient use of the library, Make the students aware of the resources of the library in the widest sense, contribute to the personal and intellectual development of the student and to develop his ability to continue with independent learning after his formal education, provide him with capacity to conduct research, obtain and access relevant information and present his findings in a manner acceptable to his peers. Dillroric (1975) insists that the objective of user education is to make the student have Knowledge of the basic kinds of print and non-print materials, knowledge of basic bibliographic tool and how to use them, knowledge of the subject areas related to the primary areas of interest and how to find reference to them. Maduako (2013) quoting NCCE guidelines (1994) summaries the objective of user education and opines

that it is aimed at making library user aware of the available and scope of library resources and services.

Edom (2007) contributing on the objective of user education programme avers that it involves all the planned instrument given to library users to enable them make use of the library, explain the information resources and return the piece of information needed with minimal assistance by the library staff. Edoke (2000) asserts that the objective of user education is to help the user make best use of overall library resources. He outlines the following as the objective of user education over information resources available to them: To develop skill necessary to retrieve required materials; To develop knowledge of materials in readers subject area; To develop skill in presenting bibliographic references; To develop skill required in making advanced studies; To create a positive attitude to information searching which will stimulate the user to make use of the resources available in different libraries.

There are various methods of impacting the skill on the use of library. Uhegbu (2001) asserts that the success or failure of any user education

programme depends to a large extent upon methods adopted to teach it. Ania (2004) states that it could be one-on-one session, library orientation formal or classroom instruction. As important as user education is, it has been characterized with numerous challenges. Joseph (2005) identifies the following as problems of user education: Over-dependence on one day orientation programme; Lack of collective curriculum for user education programme in Nigerian universities; Use of unqualified personnel to teach the course. Edom (2007) itemizes the problems as follows: Inadequate time, large number of students, inadequate number of instructors/lecturers, inadequate facilities/equipment, high cost of A.V materials, the attitude of lecturers, the attitudes of students, use of library combined with use of English.

### **Methodology**

The research design adopted for the study is the survey method using questionnaire as instrument for data collection. The population of the study is 2000 comprising of all the registered users of Imo State University law library. The sample size is 200 representing 10% of the total population.

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Questionnaire is the instrument for data collection. The data collected was analyzed using frequency count. The research questions were answered using mean score and rating scale. Any mean above the scale or benchmark mean of

2.5 was accepted while those below was rejected.

### Findings and discussion

Research question 1: What is the law student understanding of the concept of library user education as a course?

**Table 1:** Distribution of response on the understanding of the concept of user education.

	Concept of user	SA	A	D	SD	X	REMARK
1.	Library use is taught in my school	50	140	6	4	3.2	positive
2.	The concept of library use is clear to me	70	125	4	1	3.3	„
3.	It is an instruction given to library users to build good library culture in them	80	105	13	2	3.3	
4.	It is an instruction designed to enable library users make optimal use of the library	90	109	1	-	3.5	
5.	It is designed to expose library users to the structures found in the library	60	140	-	-	3.3	
6	It is designed to teach library users the organization of library materials	50	150	-	-	3.3	
7.	It is designed to teach library users the rules and regulations of the library	70	128	1	1	3.3	
	Grand mean					3.3	

Table 1 shows the responses on the students understanding of the concept of user education. All the items on table 3 were accepted because they have the mean score above the grand mean of 2.5. The overall mean rating is 3.3 indicating positive response to the question. This result reveals that the respondents agree that they have understanding of the concept of library use education programme. This implies that they know what they stand to gain from the course. This understanding will propel them to

be serious with the programme and attend lecturing regularly. Eze (2004) commenting on this states that understanding of the concept of the user education programme will no doubt have positive impact on students use of the library which ultimately will affect their academic performance.

**Research question 2:** What is the course content of library use education programme law students were exposed to.

**Table 2:** Distribution of responses on the course content of user education.

	Course content of user education	SA	A	D	SD	X	REMARK
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1.	I received instruction how to use the library	180	80	8	2	3.4	
2.	I received instruction on how to use the catalogue	50	140	6	4	3.2	
3.	I was taught in how to use indexes	15	180	5	-	3.1	
4.	I received instruction on the organization of library resource	20	125	3	2	3.1	
5.	I was given instruction on library rules and regulation	70	124	4	2	3.3	
6.	I received instruction on how to identify useful reference materials	160	-	5	25	3.5	
7.	I received instruction on how to document research reports	100	90	4	6	3.4	
8.	I was taught on how to do online searching	69	120	10	1	3.3	
9.	I was taught on how to retrieve materials from the library using eternal tools	70	125	2	5	3.3	
10.	I was exposed to various information materials available in the library.	50	150				
11.	I was given instruction on how to soft information	20	180	-	-	3.1	
	Grand mean					3.5	

Table 2 shows the mean rating scores of the respondents on the content of user education. All the items on table 2 received higher response rate on agree than disagree which indicates a positive response to the question. This is confirmed by the mean response score recorded by the items which are all above the expected mean of 2.5. The result of the analysis reveals that the content of user education given to law students is in line with the objective of the programme. The major object of user education is to inculcate in library users the skill to make use of the library, exploit the information resources and

retrieve the needed information with minimal assistance and supervision by the library staff. This findings in in line with Iheaturu's (2002) outline of the objectives of user education which includes: Making students aware of library resources, Contribute to the personal and intellectual development of the students and to develop his ability to continue independent learning after his formal education, Provide him with capability to conduct research obtain and access relevant information and present his answers in a manner acceptable to his peers. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) corroborating this, insist that user

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education must be designed to acquaint library. students with the full, resources of the

**Research Question 3:** What are the methods improved in leading user education.

Table 3: distribution of responses on the methods of library user education programme.

		SA	A	D	SD	X	REMARK
1.	Library tour	20	160	15	5	3.0	Positive
2.	Lecture method	-	200	-	-	3.0	Positive
3.	Demonstration method	50	100	35	15	3.0	Positive
4.	Library orientation	40	15	8	2	3.1	Positive
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>3.3</b>	

Table 3 shows that the overall mean rating response on methods employed in teaching user education is 3.3. This is above the grand mean of 2.5. This indicates that the majority of law students agree that the items mentioned in table 5 consists of various methods used in their schools to teach user

education programme. Some of these methods include library tour, lecture method, library orientation and demonstration methods. Uhegbu (2001) insisted that the success or failure of any user education program depends to a large extent upon methods adopted to teach it.

**Research Question 4:** what is the effect of user education programme on law students?.

Table 4: Distribution of responses on the effect of user education on law students.

	Effect of user education	SA	A	D	SD	X	REMARK
1.	It has greatly improved my ability to retrieve needed information from the library	70	100	10	20	3.1	
2.	I can use the catalogue effectively to retrieve materials	90	90	20	-	3.4	
3.	It has enhanced my use of index as retrieval tool	80	108	5	7	3.4	
4.	It has enlightened on the various structures of literature in my field and related areas.	50	150	-	-	3.3	
5.	It has increased my motivation to use the library	20	175	5	-	3.1	
6.	It exposed me to the bibhographic database of the library	15	160	15	10	3.0	
7.	It inculcated in the ability to think critically	100	100	-	-	3.5	
8.	It made me aware of the scope of library resources	-	200	-	-	3.9	
9.	I have understanding the arrangement organization and organization of materials in the library.	10	190	-	-	3.1	

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10.	I acquired skill for independent learning	60	127	10	13	3.2	
11.	It enhanced my capacity to carry out research	80	120	-	-	3.4	
12.	It acquired skill to citate references and document my research report	40	150	6	4	3.1	
13.	It made me the aware of the value of the library in my academic pursuit	18	180	-	2	3.1	
14.	It build in me the culture of reading						
15.	It made me to become library friendly	38	150	2	10	3.1	
16.	I am able to retrieve needed from the library without difficulty.	70	125	5	-	3.3	
	<b>Grand Mean</b>					<b>3.0</b>	

The analysis on table 4 reflects the respondent opinion on the effect of user education on their use of the library. All the items on the table recorded a high response score with the overall mean rating of 3.0. This is above the grand Mean of 2.5. This indicates that the course user education has positively affected the law student of Imo State University. The implication of the finding is that IMSU law student can effectively and efficiency use their library resources.

The finding of this study is in with previous studies that found out that library user education has a positive impact on quality of students' education.

Tiekel (1995) found out that there is a significant relationship between library user education and students, grades. Prorak (1994) studied user education for music students and found a significant relationship between user education and music students grades. Iheaturu (2002) confirming this states that user education makes students to learn how to make effective use of the library and its resources. Edom (2007) opined that effective & efficient use of the library and its resources is the bedrock of academic excellence.

**Research Question 5:** What is the law students perception of user education programme?

Table: Distribution of responses on students' perception of user education programme.

<b>Option</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
Very relevant	100	50
relevant	80	40
irrelevant	15	7.5
Very irrelevant	5	2.5

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Table 5 shows the respondents perception to the relevance of the library use education. 100(50%) indicated that it is relevant, 80 (40%) considered it to be relevant while 15 & 5 (75 & 2.5%) of respondent said it is irrelevant and very irrelevant respectively. The result of the analysis reveals that library user education is relevant to the law students of Imo State University. This confirms

the opinion of Ogunmodede and Emeahara (2010), Edom (2007), Bello (2003) and Osagie (2003) that user education programme is useful to students both in caring out class assignment and in their overall academic performance.

**Research Question6:** what are the problems that hinder effective library use education programme in tour school.

Table 6: Distribution of responses on the problems that hinder user education programme in tour school.

Problems

		SA	A	D	SD	X	REMARK
1.	Over population	90	110	-	-	3.3	
2.	Lack of instructional materials	60	110	20	10	3.1	
3.	Inadequate & qualified staff	80	115	3	2	3.4	
4.	Students negative attitude to the programme	100	90	10	-	3.3	
5.	Limited time allocation	-	200	-	-	3.0	
6.	unconducive environment	80	120	-	-	3.4	
7.	Inadequate facilities	87	100	3	10	3.3	
8.	Inadequate accommodation/space	50	95	50	5	3.0	
9.	High cost A.V. materials	50	100	40	10	3.0	
	Grand mean					3.5	

Table 6 shows respondents opinion on the problems hindering effective user education in Imo State University Library. All the items on table 6 recorded a high responses rating with the overall mean of 3.2 which is above the grand mean of 2.5. The result of the analysis reveals that all the items on table 6 are problems hindering user education in the University. Some of

these problem includes over population. Lack of instructional materials, inadequate and unqualified staff, Negative attitudes of both staff and students to the programme, unconducive environment, limited time allocated to the programme as well as Inadequate accommodation/ space. In support of this finding Idowu (2008) observed that timing of the programme, quality of

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course delivery and funding of the programme are some of the areas that affects the programme which must be re-appraised. Edem & lawal (1996) contributing to improved user education programme in Nigerian University Libraries identified lack of personnel, lack of professional for teaching and practical work.

### Conclusion and recommendations

The library has been described as the "life wire and the pivot of academic activities within the University system. It's role in teaching and learning processes cannot be overstressed. For optimum utilization of the library and its resources user education programme was introduced. The major objective is to inculcate in the library users basic knowledge and skill to make effective use of the library resources.

This study dwelt on the effect of user education on the law students' use of the faculty of law library, Imo State University, Owerri. The study found that.

- The law students of Imo state university have understanding of the concept of user education.
- The course content of user education the law students were

exposed to are in line with the objectives of the programme.

- The methods adopted in teaching of the programme includes library tour lecture method, demonstration method and library orientation.
- User education programme has positively affected the law students' use of the library as well as their academic performance.
- The law students perception of the user education programme is that it is very relevant to them both in their use of the library and in their academic pursuit
- The problems that militate against effective user education include over-population, lack of instructional materials, inadequate and unqualified staff, students negative attitude towards the programme, limited time allocated to the programme, unconducive library environment, inadequate space/accommodation.

To remedy these problems, the following recommendations are proffered.

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- Adequate and qualified librarians should be employed to teach user education programme. This will help to solve the problem of over population. When there is enough and qualified instructors to handle the course, the number of students assigned to a particular teacher will reduce. This will create room for adequate monitor of the students as well as guarantee quality teaching and learning of the course. The course should be made compulsory and more credit load assigned to it. Again attendance to lectures should be made condition for examination. Students who abscond from class for certain number of times should not be allowed to write examination. This measure will help to check the students negative attitude towards the programme.
- The time allocated to the teaching of the course should be relevant. More time should be allocated to the course and the scheduling should be made to connect to students.

Conducive and enabling environment should be made available for the teaching of the programme. This calls for provision of more and larger spaces to accommodate the students. The facilities and the environment of the classroom should be made conducive for learning.

Instructional materials such as audiovisual materials, public address system and projectors should be made available. This will help to make the course interesting and stimulate students interest towards the course.

The course should be designed to be more practical oriented to complement the theoretical aspect of it.

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**Author biography**

**Blessing Solomom Uwakwe** PhD, CLN is Serials Librarian Imo State University Owerri

**Cajetan O. Onyeneke** PhD, CLN is Virtual Librarian Imo State University Owerri

**Immaculatta Ngozi Njoku** CLN is Faculty Librarian, Faculty of Engineering library Imo State University, Owerri.