RESEARCH ARTICLE

EVALUATION OF REFERENCE AND INFORMATION SERVICES DELIVERY IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NASARAWA STATE; A STUDY OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY LAFIA

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	The research "Reference and Information Services Delivery in Academic Libraries in Nasarawa State" is anchored towards a representation of Academic library. The statement of problem is geared on lack of recognizing the vital role of reference and information services, as users of these libraries do not use reference resources for their academic nourishment or pursuit rather they patronize other sources, hence the thrust of the study. The research is justified in that it adopts varied ideas and concepts by scholars, who have explored and contributed in the same direction with this study. The aim of the study is to examine the reference and information services of selected Academic libraries in Nasarawa state i.e. Federal University Library Lafia. The main research technique employed in this study is the quantitative research with emphasis on descriptive survey research. The study finally resulted to new discoveries in Reference and Information services. Hence, the study recommends that more study should be executed on the evaluation of reference sources and services in academic libraries generally.

INTRODUCTION

Learning is the process of acquiring new or modifying existing knowledge, behaviours, skills, values or preferences. Mayer (2000) asserts that evidence in which learning has occurred may be seen in changes or behaviour from simple to complex, from moving a finger to skill in synthesizing information or a change in attitude. In the same vein, Abdulsalami (2016) remarks that the academic library is a positive influencing factor on learning and students' academic success. The researcher perceives a library as one of the most valuable institution where learning is acquired. Nigeria has over the past few decades embarked on various areas of human endeavour that would bring about development educationally, economically, socially, culturally and technologically. The role information plays in the development of individuals, organizations, institutions and the Nation has effectively placed it as a very vital commodity. The benefits are only seen when the right information is provided to the user at the right time. Valid information is the key to knowledge which is a pre-requisite for any form of development. That is why the value of any institution whose main duty is to disseminate

information is by all reasons immeasurable in a growing nation; this information usually comes in various formats like books and non-books depending on the nature of the users. Ezioko (2000) describes a library as collection of resources in a variety of formats that is organised by information professionals or other experts who provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and offer targeted services and programs with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole. Similarly, library is a collection or group of collections of books and/or other print or non-print materials organised and maintained for use (reading, consultation, study, research).Users normally come into library with varying information needs which ranges from directional guidance to in-depth bibliographic search. Akinade (2000) states that, the expectation of people when they visit the library to source for and retrieve information are always high. Therefore, when the expectations are not met, the disappointment and frustration that follows can be high. Hence Libraries are not only willing to give help to individual readers; they consider the assistance as an important aspect of their responsibility to the users and justification for their training. Academic libraries in its generic term refer to all the Libraries that exist in institutions of higher learning.

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Their major aim is to provide the curricular educational needs of the students as well as to support the teaching staff in their up-to date materials required for their teaching. Edoka (2000) defines academic libraries as "Libraries that exist in institutions of higher education such as universities, colleges of education, colleges of technology and polytechnics". There are largely tertiary education institutions usually available after secondary education. Also there are variations in the extent of higher education. Some colleges focus almost entirely on curricular needs, universities in particular usually go beyond this to emphasize research and the interest of the wider population. The direction and extent of these functions in any given academic library are largely determined by the nature of academic programs of the parent institution. The prime obligation of an academic library is to provide appropriate information resources for study and research to the members of its own institution. Library operations generally are by nature, service oriented, this is reflected in the referral services rendered by libraries considering the role academic libraries play in provision of information resources that will support the academic objectives of the institution particularly in the areas of learning, teaching and research Academic library is viewed as libraries attached to universities, colleges, polytechnics serving the teaching, learning and research needs of students and staff.

Hence services expected of academic libraries include, user education services, inter-library services, abstracting services, cataloguing service, reprographic services, bibliographic services, circulation services, reference services and information services. For the purpose of this study, a reference service is defined as the ability of a reference librarian to strive within and outside available resources to provide answers to reference queries. Hence, reference and information services rendered in academic libraries include: Abstracting services, Indexing services, photocopying services, Information services, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) and users' instruction services Abdulsalami (2019). The resources for these reference and information services may include Dictionaries, Encyclopaedias, Directories, Manuals and Handbook, Maps, Bibliographies, Biographies, Yearbooks, Almanacs and online resources. However, the methods employed in rendering these services in academic libraries are: Answering of query, Telephone, Fax, E-mail, internet, Readers advisory services, verification, Referral services, Inter-library loans, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Data base searches and Library Instructions programme.

The role of reference and information librarian is extremely important. A good reference and information librarian is bound to encourage the use of academic libraries by acting as an intermediary between users and information and able to bring efficient flow of resources and the seeker together without waste of time. The academic library is to provide reference and information services to users (lecturers, students, researchers) who rely solely on the libraries for their desire and needed information in advancing knowledge. Therefore, the reference librarian is expected to possess a wide range of intellectual skills and desire to assist users, flair for organizing document, ability to search literature, to communicate fluently and adequate knowledge of the resources. The natures of reference and information services vary from one type of library to another. The nature differs due to the kind of clientele to be served and the objectives of the library to be fulfilled. In academic libraries reference and information services attached

great importance to instruction in the use of the library. A lot of assistance in the provision of information is given to students and researchers who constitute the bulk of academic library users. In spite of these paramount roles of reference librarians academic libraries are battling with hindrances of poor funding, inadequate trained personnel, inadequate and outdated reading materials, poor handling of users instruction services and lack of technology application in reference and information services. These hindrances have no doubt constituted a great challenge to academic libraries in achieving their objectives. However, Olanloku (2003), and Madu (2008) observed the following strategies for enhancing effective service delivery: provision of the state- of –the art library and information services, provision of an improved reference and information services, provision of adequate finance, training and retraining opportunities for reference staff, acquisition of current reference resources and the provision of compulsory users instruction services to all categories of libraries among others. These strategies if adopted, the academic library will achieve effective reference and information service delivery. However, observation shows that reference and information services vary in terms of service and practices among academic libraries in Nasarawa State.

Statement of the Problem: The Reference and information services of an academic library play very crucial and critical roles in presenting a good image of the library, and the provision of equitable, timely and accurate information delivery services. The library provides solutions to both academic and personal problems which are made available by the reference and information services librarian who is ready at all times with answers to queries in almost every field. In spite of the importance attached to reference and information service delivery, it has been observed that academic libraries in Nasarawa State seem not to recognize the vital role of this services, which shows that users of these libraries are not making use of these reference resources for their academic nourishment rather they look out or patronize other information centres and books outside the libraries for their information needs, hence the thrust of the study. Furthermore, it appears that, users available in these libraries also find it difficult to locate and make effective use of these information materials, which may be due to lack of knowledge about the reference resources and services. Also these libraries seem to be devilled with myriad of problems.

These include: poor reference services as a result of unqualified personnel, poor handling of users instruction programme, inadequate funding, Insufficient reading materials, out-dated reference tools, inadequate accommodation and lack of modern technology application in reference and information services, these have exposed the pathetic situation found in academic library services especially reference and information services in Nigeria particularly Federal University academic libraries. Others scholars have researched into the problems of reference services, assessment of reference services in academic libraries, evaluation of reference resources and services of public libraries and appraisal of reference services in public libraries but none has researched into the reference and information service delivery in academic library in Nasarawa State. It is against these backdrops that the researcher has embarked on this study to fill in the gap, hence the problem of the study.

Objective of the Study: The main purpose of this study is to examine the reference and information services delivery in academic libraries in Federal University Lafia, Nasarawa State. Specifically, among the objective; the study sets to:

- Identify reference and information services provided in academic libraries in Federal University Libraries Lafia
- Find out resources available for reference and information services delivery in these libraries.
- Identify methods used for reference and information services delivery in Federal University Libraries Lafia.
- Ascertain effectiveness of reference and information services delivery in Federal University Libraries Lafia
- Determine hindrances to reference and information service delivery in Federal University Libraries Lafia.
- Suggest strategies for effective reference and information service delivery in Federal University Libraries Lafia

Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions:

- What types of reference and information services are provided in academic libraries in Federal University Libraries Lafia?
- What types of reference and information resources are available in rendering reference services to Users in Federal University Lafia?
- What are the methods used for reference and information service delivery?
- How effective are reference and information services delivery in Federal University Libraries Lafia?
- What are the hindrances to reference and information services delivery in Federal University Libraries Lafia?
- What strategies can be adopted to enhance effective reference and information services delivery in Federal University Libraries Lafia?

Reference Services have been a topic of discourse both nationally and internationally by scholars, however, in recent times, emphasis is on digital and hybrid reference services and studies were carried out by other scholars like Lawal (2001). The researchers discovered that studies made by these scholars, highlight the effectiveness of digital resources in reference services, which also shares affinity with this study.

Conceptual Framework: The research is conceptualized on ideas and contributions in-line with this study. Higher education in Nigeria is primarily tied to man power development and this could only be achieved through the effective use of the resources and services of academic libraries. Skinner et al (2013) posits that an academic library is that which is attached to higher education institutions which serves two complementary purpose, to support the school curriculum and to support the research of the university faculties, students and researchers e.g. Harvard University library is considered to be the largest strict academic library in the world as affirmed by Skinner (2009). Without the library the institution cannot realize both its general and specific aims

and objectives which among others include teaching, research, publication and conservation of knowledge. In similar view Dollah (2002) defines academics libraries as libraries attached to universities and colleges serving the teaching, learning and research needs of the staff and students. In agreement with above stance, Dan Azumi (2001) notes that academic libraries are those in institutions of higher learning like universities, colleges of education and polytechnics. They are established to cater for the need of the institutions in realizing their objectives of teaching, research learning and publication. Agu (2010) states that academic libraries are libraries situated in institutions of higher learning. This is to say that any library attached to post-secondary or tertiary institution can be described as an academic library. In other words, academic libraries exist in institutions of higher education, the colleges of technology, and the polytechnics. Agu further stressed that academic libraries vary in shape, size and objective or mission statement from one institution to another, but their characteristic functions are both academic and administratively designed and geared towards the achievement of educational objectives as set by the individual academic institutions.

Nevertheless, for the thrust of this study, Babuja and Agu's definition of academic library among others was adopted. It is in the light of these that academic libraries exist in order to provide their clientele with books and other information sources. They also provide various services in order to make these resources accessible through effective reference service. Some researcher sees reference services "as an art which draws from the raw materials of all subject areas," and to perform well as a reference librarian, a substantive knowledge is a must, liberal education a help, a scientific and technological background is useful, but imagination is indispensable. Prytech (2005) describes reference services "as the phase of library work which is directly concerned with assistance to readers in securing information and the resources of the library in study and research". Reference services are indeed the communication of all library activities aimed at facilitating the use of library and its resources. In consonance Edoka (2000) defines reference services as the personal assistance given by the librarian to individual in search of information for whatever purpose, as well as various library activities deliberately designed to facilitate easy provision of information.

In the same vain Adeyemi (2005) affirms reference service as "that part of library system which is charged with the responsibility of aiding readers in the use of resources within the library wall as distinguished from the withdrawal of books and other materials for use at home." The service is provided by professionals whose primary task is to identify exactly what the readers want and provide answers to same using one or a combination of books or tools. In agreement with Madu et al (2008) opines that reference services are seen as "personal assistance eagerly given to library users in pursuit of information by librarian in charge of reference section". Therefore, reference service in this work can be defined as the direct personal assistance to readers seeking information. In other words, reference service is the personal aid given by the librarian to an individual client in meeting his/her information needs. Information service involve the in-depth analysis of the intellectual content of the literature of specialized subject area and its systematic organization and dissemination in form of bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, reviews, journals, current contents and other alerting reporting journal literature for the

use of specialists. However, the academic reference librarians have to live above average in facing their challenge of providing services to the academic community because they are information driven. The librarians need to understand the needs of the consumer of information he provides. He should focus on what the patrons would like and how to deliver this rather than training the consumer to what the library offers. Bicknell (2004) argues that if the librarian tries to find out the actual information needs of users, the patron may be encouraged to follow-up question. If the reference librarian ensures that patrons find out what is needed the interaction is more likely to be a success. According to Bicknell the environment is also very important for reference transaction. Reference transaction should take place in conducive environments. This can have positive impact on the user, and the transaction can also be successful. In line with the above argument Lawal (2001) agrees that the functions of Nigeria reference librarian are twofold namely; assistance and instruction in library use, and location of library materials. The role of the reference librarian cannot be over emphasized as the reputation of modern academic libraries to a large extent depends on the ability of the librarian to meet up with current challenges of quality reference services. Therefore, reference librarian in the context of this work is the librarian with professional knowledge that provides assistance, answer queries posed by users in search of information in an academic library.

An Overview of the Concept of Reference Services in Libraries: Historically, libraries have been described as the „storehouse of knowledge and been organized along traditional and functional lines of acquisition, cataloguing and loan services. The invention of printing in the mid-15th century, the wide distribution of books by the 16th century, the growth of literacy among middle classes in the 17th and 18th centuries and the 19th century's mass education movement increased both the amount of the demand for information. As early as the mid-18th century, people were complaining there simply was too much to read, too much to know (Katz, 2002). Reference service arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's in response to several forces and trends, including:

- An increase in the number and variety of information resources available in Libraries and outside,
- An increase in the complexity of those information resources,
- These increases (above) combined together made it more difficult for people to find the resource they were looking for, and to find the information they needed within that resource, and
- An increase in the number and diversity of people using libraries (particularly public libraries), leading to a wider range of information needs, enquiries, and sophistication in the search for information.

Historians of reference service usually trace modern concepts of reference work to Samuel Greens (1876) paper, Personal Relations between Librarians and readers, later published in American Library Journal (now Library Journal) Bopp and Smith, (2001). While it is doubtful that Green actually invented the idea of reference service for library Users, he 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 his article, Green discussed the need for librarians actively to assist members of

their communities in using library resources. The publication of Greens article helped to popularize the new concept of reference service. In his article Green (1876) introduced four main functions of the reference Librarian which remain as the basic tenets of reference service today:

- Instructs patrons how to use the library
- Answers patron queries
- Aids the patron in selecting resources
- Promotes the library within the community

His article noted that although catalogues and indexes are valuable, most users require instruction in their use. User also must be guided in selecting the books that best meet their information needs. Green also highlighted the importance of human interaction in the personal assistance process where librarians must be easy to get at and pleasant to talk with (i.e., approachable), and librarians must mingle freely with users and help them in every way. Many changes have taken place since the publication of that first article. Rothstein (2005) detailed the growth and development of reference service from the earliest times until the mid-twentieth century. Technological innovation has played a key role in reference librarianship in the second half of the twentieth century. During the 1960s, libraries began to explore new technologies such as microfilm and microfiche, tapes and sound recordings. The 1970s, brought full-text databases such as LEXIS and WESTLAW in the field of law. The 1980s brought about significant changes with the emergence of electronic card catalogues in many academic, public, and special libraries. Eventually the electronic catalogue databases became the online public access catalogues (OPACs) providing local as well as remote access. Another major change in the process of storage, retrieval and dissemination of information was brought by the invention of CD-ROMs. By the late 1990s, many libraries moved from CD-ROM to providing databases through the Internet. The researchers posit that academic libraries were the first to provide digital reference services in the early 1980s, one of such services is the online which were the Electronic Access to Reference Services (EARS) launched by the University of Maryland Health Services Library in Baltimore in 1984. Since that time, the number of academic and public libraries offering e-mail reference service continues to grow making e-mail the most common vehicle for providing digital reference services.

Reference and Information Services provided in Academic Libraries: The provision of reference services in academic libraries is regarded as a serious aspect of library services which seeks to satisfy the need of the user in teaching, research and learning. The provision of information and reference services represents an important part of academic libraries service and may be supplied in a variety of ways within the library system" One of the ways is through the provision of personal assistance. Edoka (2000) opined that the reference librarian in his bid to satisfy definite questions put to him by users provides any or several of the following: .

- library orientation
- Acquisition list and bulletins
- Current awareness services (CAS)
- Special bibliographies
- Provision of index and abstracts
- Translation services

- Referral services e.g. providing access to appropriate subject specialist.
- Photocopying services.

In a similar view Nwegbu (2005) affirms that, provision of reference services goes beyond the actual use of reference books, and daily routine of responding to users queries. It covers anything necessary to help the reader in his or her quest for information, education and knowledge. Nwegbu further itemized the scope of reference service to include:

- Selection of an adequate and suitable collections of reference materials
- The arrangement and maintenance of the collection for easy and convenient use
- Suggestions as to the materials to be used for special purpose.
- Instruction to individual or groups in the use of reference books and method
- Constant work in answering individual question and helping individual readers to find some elusive facts or in correcting some wrong method of research on the part of an experienced reader.

The reference librarians in academic library also have to provide information technologies apart from books. Mole (2004) believed that efficient use of information technology is a key to providing access to information in reference services. He further stated that a big challenge is now facing reference librarians in the area of utilizing these new technologies to provide reference and give library users improved access to the world's reference sources. This implies that the academic reference librarian should not only be restricted to printed sources in provision of services but should include other technologies that will enhance speedy and accurate dissemination of information to his clientele. Reference and information services offered in academic libraries include: Library orientation and instruction, user instruction is a process of making library patrons to learn how to make effective and efficient use of the library resources through the acquisition of skills in identification, location, retrieval and exploitation of information. The reference librarians through user instruction acquaint the clientele of the resources in the reference section of academic library and the uses of those resources. Edoka (2000) affirmed that "the objective of giving user instruction is to help the user to make the best use of the overall library resources. Edoka further stressed that a carefully planned and executed user instruction programme greatly ensure the realization of this objective. The specific aims of the programme include:

- To develop readers awareness of the overall information resources available to them in their own and other libraries.
- To developed skills required in making advanced studies.
- To create positive attitude to information searching that will stimulate the user to make use of the resources available at different libraries.

Abstracting and indexing services: Indexing enable users to locate the books that are available in the subject areas they need. Abstracting services produce the summaries of the contents of reading materials in the library thereby serving as time savers for the library users.

Akanya (2006) quoting Jack revealed that "another facility for reference and information services include copying by means of photographic or photocopying equipment these facilities will reduce mutilation of books and theft to the barest minimum in the reference sections of academic libraries. Another reference service is Selective Dissemination of information (SDI) which Madu (2008) sees as "user package reference service mainly for research. In some places it is likened to current awareness services because of its objective of keeping researchers aware of current developments in their areas of specialization. It could also take the form of providing the researchers with table of contents of journal that has just arrived or recently published article or citation on pre-determined topics relevant to the target users. This is an important reference service by academic librarian in the reference section in meeting the information needs of academic staff, students and researchers. Bibliographic services provide the list of publications that are related to each other. The librarian in a reference section of an academic library compiles bibliographies on all subjects for the verification of the correctness and completeness of the information about publications. These services are to assist users to identify and locate materials relevant to their work. Computer Online Services: Mole (2006) asserts that, contemporary technology has in the last couple of decades played a major role in the use of reference materials. The availability of information in electronic form, specifically through online services and CD-ROM, has presented new opportunities and challenges for users of reference sources and services. Agu (2006) toeing the same line, observed that utilization of online search services provide opportunities for expansion of traditional academic reference services. The advent of this technology has opened more doors for libraries especially academic reference services to provide information in and outside the library. Irrespective of time, space and distance, any academic library that fails in this responsibility will make the users to resort to utilization of these resources outside the library environment. Information services: Edoka (2006) describes this as activities that involve the in-depth analysis of the intellectual content of literature of specialist subject area and its systematic organization and dissemination in form of bibliographies, indexes, abstracts, review journals, current contents and other alerting, reporting, and journal literature for the use of specialists. The reference section plays an important role in provision of this information services that will inform the teaching staff, students and researchers in their areas of interest.

Display service: Every library should be able to display its new books, document and serial materials on racks at the beginning of every month. Display racks are usually stationed at a strategic position within the reference section of academic libraries for users view. In consonance with this view, Edoka (2000) opines that, display helps to "sell" library services to users. The physical location of the library if arrived from point of view of convenience to user is perhaps the best way of drawing attention to the library services. He further stressed that; a display is the technique of collecting and arranging the information resources (books, serials, articles, theses, photographs, diagrams etc.) on central theme in a prominent place for a short time in order to attract the attention and arouse the interest of users in the topic presented. This is necessary because the academic reference section owes the user to provide up-to-date accurate and relevant information for academic excellence, hence this service must be sustained.

Inter-library lending services: Harrods Librarian Glossary describes inter-library lending as "schemes where by users of one library or information system may request their services to borrow from other library system materials not held in their own library system. Edoka (2000) observes that in 1971, Ibadan and Ile-Ife entered into cooperative arrangement; the objective was to enable the young universities in Benin City to expose itself to the relatively rich information resources at the University of Ibadan. However, with technological development, inter-lending services among reference librarians in academic library are made easy, because request can be processed electronically and it is faster when both borrowing and lending libraries belong to the same electronic utility. The essence of engaging in inter-library services among academic reference librarians is to enrich its collections and provide improved and qualitative services to users.

Resources Available for Reference and Information Services in Academic Libraries: Okore (2009) observes that, resources can be people, equipment, facilities for funding or any other aid required for the completion of a project. However, for the purpose of this work the resources for reference and information services refer to all resources that are required to facilitate reference services in academic libraries. These include:

- Facilities /infrastructures: These are equipment, structure and tools that are required to achieve the stated objective of the reference section of academic libraries. These include: a good accommodation to house the collection, a well-ventilated building, air condition, tables, chairs, catalogue cabinet, shelves and photocopy machines.
- Personnel: This is one of the critical resources in the reference service of academic libraries, because no matter the amount of resources owned by the library it will amount to nothing except there are qualified personnel to initiate, mediate, select, and organize a balanced collection of materials to meet the information needs of the clientele. Therefore, the role of a reference librarian is critical in providing effective reference services in academic libraries.
- Reference sources: Okey (2006) observes that "reference sources are consulted most frequently than others for specific information, rather than being read from cover to cover". They contain facts that have been brought together from various sources and are organized for quick and easy use in the library and have alphabetical and chronological arrangement. Reference sources are specifically compiled to provide answers to any type of query that might be raised by the user of a library. They contain facts and rarely contain opinions. Reference sources are not meant to be read from cover to cover like other book materials, reference sources are used to obtain a specific answer to a question or to indicate other sources to use during the research process. Therefore, for the purpose of this work reference sources can be defined as documents that are consulted when necessary in order to supply specific information desired by library users. Reference sources can appear in both printed and electronic formats.

Reference sources are usually divided into two

- General reference sources
- Subject/specific reference sources

The materials in the general reference category are broad in scope and not limited to any single or specific subject but provide information on different subject fields. A general reference source has a wide and unrestricted coverage. Materials in this category include:

- Dictionaries (Oxford/Webster Dictionary)
- General Encyclopedias (Britannica, Americana)
- Indexes (Medicus)
- Year books (Nigeria Year book)
- Almanacs (Whitakers)
- Directories (Vanguard Yellow pages, Nigeria Telecommunication Directory)
- Biographical (who is who in Africa, who is who in Nigeria)
- Gazettes (gazetteer)
- Bibliographies (National bibliography)
- Atlases (Philips Collins)

While specific or subject reference sources are devoted to a specific subject such as, Education, Arts, or History. Reference sources are publications in which items of information about a particular subject such as literature, History, Music, sports, and Education are brought together from many sources and arranged so that individual items can be found quickly and easily. Reference sources could be further stated as:

- Sources that supplement general reference books by giving more specific information and including specialized information omitted from the general encyclopaedia.
- They provide specialized definitions and explanations for words and phrases in a given field that are not found in general word dictionaries.
- They trace the growth of important ideas in a subject area.
- They provide an introduction to the development of the literature of the subject
- They give authoritative information on major questions and issues in a specialized area.
- They explain and clarify concepts.
- They locate, describe and evaluate the literature of the field.
- They provide facts (figure), which indicate trends and they summarize the events of a given year in a given subject.

Source in the subject reference category include

- Subject Encyclopaedias (Encyclopaedia of Psychology, Education, Science and Technology).
- Subject dictionaries
- Atlases
- Almanacs
- Specific subject bibliographies
- Index
- Year book

Reference sources are: Encyclopaedias: These are reference sources that contain information in almost every field of knowledge or on a subject area. They provide background knowledge information on any topic, as well as current information.

Table 1. Mean responses on how often reference services are provided

Users N=120, staff: N=7

S/N	SERVICES	V.O	O	L.O	N.O	MEAN	DECISION	STAFF MEAN	DECISION
1	Current Awareness services	70	30	15	12	3.16	A	3.28	A
2	Selective dissemination of information	75	18	25	7	3.09	A	3.14	A
3	Indexing services	73	27	17	10	2.72	A	2.71	A
4	Abstracting services	73	27	17	10	2.70	A	2.71	A
5	Bibliographic services	50	60	10	7	2.74	A	2.71	A
6	Photocopying services	40	60	11	6	2.63	A	2.86	A
7	Computer services	45	55	15	12	2.52	A	2.29	R
8	Inter-library services	12	25	25	65	2.14	R	1.14	R
9	Users instruction services	30	40	50	7	2.48	R	2.57	A
10	Information services	25	30	55	17	2.61	A	1.86	R
11	Online information retrieval services	20	2O	30	57	2.15	R	1.14	R
12	Referral services	15	20	40	52	2.13	R	1.14	R

Table 2. What are the resources provided/offered in your institution Library?

Users: N=120, staff: N=7

S/N	RESOURCES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	DECISION	STAFF PERCENTAGE	DECISION
1	Dictionaries	118	97.3	A	100	A
2	Encyclopedias	115	92.2	A	100	A
3	Directories	26	22.1	A	100	A
4	Bibliographies	36	32.6	A	100	A
5	Almanacs	40	88.0	A	85.7	A
6	Biographies	22	22.1	A	100	A
7	Periodicals	21	21.7	A	100	A
8	Geographical sources	40	45.7	A	71.4	A
9	Online catalogue	68	58.4	R	0	R
10	Indexes	32	29.0	A	100	A
11	Manuals	39	36.0	A	57.1	A

Table 3. Methods used for reference and information service delivery

Users N=120, staff: N=7

S/N	Methods	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	DECISION	STAFF MEAN	DECISION
1	Ready reference question	30	55	20	17	2.73	A	3.14	A
2	Fax, Telephone, E-mail, Internet	27	30	50	20	2.74	A	2.29	R
3	Information and referral services	25	65	30	17	2.82	A	2.14	R
4	Bibliographic services	27	60	20	20	2.77	A	2.86	A
5	Selective Dissemination of information	30	56	21	20	2.65	A	2.86	A
6	Data Base Searches	22	65	20	20	2.47	R	1.57	R
7	Library Orientation/instruction	25	70	12	20	2.71	A	3.28	A
8	Current Awareness Services	12	90	15	10	2.79	A	2.71	A

Table 4. Hindrances to reference and information services in academic libraries in Federal University Libraries Lafia

Users: N= 120, staff: N=7

S/N	Hindrances	SA	A	LO	NO	MEAN	DECISION	STAFF MEAN	DECISION
1	Inadequate funding	80	20	15	12	2.80	A	3.28	A
2	Poor infrastructures	20	80	20	7	3.10	A	3.28	A
3	Insufficient reference materials	40	70	15	2	3.06	A	3.28	A
4	Outdated reference materials	37	70	10	10	3.05	A	3.43	A
5	Inadequate trained personnel	37	70	13	7	3.01	A	3.28	A
6	Inadequate of ICT Facilities	40	67	15	5	3.01	A	3.43	A
7	Poor publicity of reference materials	10	100	10	7	3.05	A	2.29	R
8	Poor library orientation	45	60	17	5	2.95	A	3.00	A
9	Staff indifference	37	70	15	5	3.05	A	2.14	R
10	Poor reading Environment	47	65	5	10	3.00	A	2.57	A
11	Inadequate opening hours	33	64	10	10	3.06	A	2.29	A

Table 5. Strategies Enhance for Effective Reference and Information Services in Academic Libraries, Federal University Lafia

Users: N=120, staff: N=7

S/N	Strategies	SA	A	D	SD	MEAN	DECISION	STAFF MEAN	DECISION
1	Improved funding	55	52	10	10	3.12	A	3.57	A
2	Provision of adequate infrastructure	55	52	10	10	3.17	A	3.17	A
3	Purchase of adequate reference materials	55	52	10	10	3.09	A	3.57	A
4	Purchase of current reference materials	55	52	24	19	3.10	A	3.10	A
5	Employment of qualified reference personnel	55	52	15	5	3.12	A	3.28	A
6	Application of ICT Facilities to reference services	55	52	5	10	3.07	A	3.28	A
7	Adequate publicity of reference sources	57	50	10	10	3.05	A	3.00	A
8	Introduction of compulsory user education to staff and students	50	60	10	7	3.05	A	3.00	A
9	Formulation of well defined reference policy	50	60	10	7	3.05	A	3.28	A
10	Training & retraining opportunities to be provided	50	60	12	5	3.02		A	3.28

Encyclopaedia seldom treats a topic in a minute detail, but they are usually factual and current. They only provide readable introduction by an authority, they also list reference or further reading for the student who wishes to go beyond the mere introduction. Dictionaries: According to Babuje (2001) defines a dictionary a book dealing with words/terms and language arranged in alphabetical order. Dictionaries provide beside meanings, aspect of words like spelling ontology, pronunciation etc. Dictionaries are of various types ranging from general to specialized, e g Webster Third International Dictionary, Oxford dictionary, Chambers dictionary of Education, Longman Dictionary of scientific usage and Dictionary of Quotation. Directories: A Directory is a list of persons or organizations, systematically arranged, usually in alphabetical or classified order, giving address, and names of persons, organizations, professional and trade associations, institutions of learning, firms and clubs and fraternities groups, example Nigerian Telephone Directory, Hotel Directory, Industrial. Etc.

Bibliographies: These provide list of articles in periodical, books, Technical Reports, Conference, Proceedings, Thesis and Dissertations on a particular subject or by a given author. Listed materials are systematically arranged by authors, titles and subjects. It is a reference source that contains the systematic description of list of books or articles surname, others names, title of a book or an article, place of publication, publisher's name and date of publication. Chigbu, et al (2009)

Biographies: These are documentations on the life and activities of an individual who could be dead or alive. Biographies written by the individuals are autobiographies. Biographies cover wide range of topics as: hobbies, professions, life style. They are meant to inform and satisfy the curiosities of knowing about the great and near great men both living and dead. It is a good reference source for reference questions, e.g. Universal and current Biographies, National and local Biographies, professional and subject Biographies.

Yearbooks: These provide records of the previous year activities, data and events, e g Nigeria Yearbook, Africa Year book; they provide information on events such as political, economic and social aspects of countries. Examples of Year books are, Africa South of the Sahara, Europa World Yearbook (formerly Europe Year book) and Statesman Yearbook.

Indexes: These provide information about the existence of certain publication and where to locate the information in the text. They are arranged alphabetically based on surname of author. Indexes differ from a catalogue. They also provide information on surname, titles, and also cover edited articles, Journals and Newspapers, e.g. readers'' guide to periodical literature, Agricultural Index, Biological science Index and social science Index.

Abstract: An Abstract is a form of current Bibliography in which books and mainly contribution to periodicals are summarized. They are accompanied by adequate bibliographical description to enable the publication or article to be traced, example Nigerian Universities Dissertation Abstract, Chemical Abstracts, Science Abstract.

Geographical Sources: These provide information on places, such as towns, cities, states, countries, physical features such as mountains and valleys. Geographic sources include: Maps which are travel guides. They are the representation of surface of the earth on flat surface or paper showing countries, oceans and rivers. Atlases provide information on physical and climatic conditions of different places such as towns, countries and regions. Examples of atlases are, The Times Atlas of the World and the Shepherd Historic Atlas. Gazetteers are geography dictionary or index that usually provides information on towns, cities, countries and other geographical features. In addition, they provide information on latitude, longitude, description and statistics about places, example, Chambers World, Gazetteer, Chambers Columbia Gazetteer of the World and Webster New Geographical Dictionary. Travel Guides provide information to travellers about the places of interest and features of such as places.

Periodicals: The word periodicals and serials are used interchangeably. They are types of publications that are issued in successive parts usually at regular intervals. Such publications include: Newspapers, Newsletters, Magazines, Journal, Annuals such as Reports, Memoirs Proceedings of meetings, and Transaction of Societies. Periodicals supply generally, latest possible information on a given subject and serve as information primary source of materials on a new subject, Chigbu, et al (2009).

Electronic sources: Are sources in the library that are in Machine Readable format and requires electricity to make them usable". In addition, Okore, Asogwa and Eke (2009) describe electronic sources as resources which are accessed via internet. The library provides access to a wide variety of electronic sources including, e-books, e-journals, index and collections, databases and websites. E-resources are useful because of the volume of information they contain, and the convenience of accessing information anywhere and anytime.

Method Used for Reference and Information Services Delivery: For some time now, reference service delivery has undergone dramatic and radical changes especially with the methods employed and the services used. This has no doubt resulted in effective search and efficient delivery. Tracing the development, "originally, Librarian answer questions and assist library users from reference desk and readers, advisory desk." This was followed by the use of telephone and mails to answer questions. Modern reference services now involved the use of fax, email and internet. Another method of reference services is answering of query. According to Edoka (2002) person to person "interaction" relationships that exist between a patron and librarian, answering reference questions have been the traditional function of reference and information services unit in libraries. Under this traditional pattern, a patron comes to the library with his information need usually in form of question. The reference librarian consults the relevant source for probable answer and hands over same to patron. In addition, reference services take different forms, but central to them is the provision of assistance to individuals seeking information. This singular role which underlines the various forms has remained stable over the years. The forms can be distinguished in theory, and in practice; they have remained the same and can be approached in the same way this include; ready- reference questions, information and referral services, Bibliographic Verification, Inter- library loans, Selective Dissemination of information (SDI), Data Base searches, Research Questions and Library Orientation.

Effectiveness of Reference and Information Service Delivery in Academic Libraries: The effectiveness of reference services using a qualified personal is synonymous with effective reference services. The personnel are the vital element in effective promotion of reference services. In the same vein the reference librarians represent the reference services and act as the key to the effective user of reference materials in the library. However, speaking on availability of library materials is "the information aspect of the library services that is collecting, synthesizing and disseminating up-to-date, accurate and unbiased relevant information available in books, periodicals, bulletins, guides, abstracts, indexes, bibliographies, and non-book formats which can be stored and retrieved whenever needed. Hence the effectiveness of reference and information services is measured by the competency of the librarian as well as the availability of current information materials in providing efficient and effective services in academic libraries. Information and communication technologies have made the use of reference materials and the nature of reference work considerably more effective. Abdulsalami agreed that on-line access tool such as OPAC, specialized indexes; directories etc. provide access to bibliographic sources information about the net. In the same vein, access to adequate library resources is essential to the attainment of superior academic skills. Exposure to electronic databases, up-to-date books and state-of-the art facilities engenders in the user the confidence and assurance that the library is a place to constantly visit. In a related view Ozioko (2005) and Nwanchukwu (2005) advise that end users must possess some skills. Ojedokun (2001) also confirmed this as he discovered that students at the University of Botswana lacked skills and this greatly impeded their meaningful exploration of the internet. Conclusively, Nkiko (2007) observed that user education must be practically oriented where users of reference services are taught library skill, internet surfing techniques. Deducing from the above opinion, it is obvious that information and communication technologies and user education plays a greater role in measuring the effectiveness of reference services in academic libraries.

Hindrances to Effective Reference Services Delivery: Reference services is the act of bringing into contact the right reader and the right book or the right information sources at the right time in the right personal way Mole (2006). Anything short of that will lead to hindrances that will affect the effective and efficient use of reference services in academic libraries. These include: Oyesika and Oduwole (2004) in their study of use of academic libraries discovered that majority of the users do not know the proper methods of retrieving materials in the library, as good percentage of them get materials on the shelves through trial and error. In affirmation, citing Nkiko (2007) asserts that students and researchers using academic libraries are generally not finding it easy to use the Library properly. According to him majority of them are not aware of relevant abstracts, indexes, and inter-library loan services and that among those who are aware of the existence of subject catalogue, about half do not use it or have difficulty in using it. Academic reference service in most tropical Africa rarely provide adequate and relevant materials, hence they are ineffective." This is because academic reference sections are mainly stocked with foreign literatures that are both out dated and irrelevant to the information needs and interest of users that are expected to read them. In other words resources in academic libraries in Nigeria are already overstretched and inadequate for the needs of the academic and research staff as well as the full- time students. Most of the books are out dated, the journal subscriptions grossly irregular. In conclusion the reference collections are extremely poor any academic collections that are not current and are inadequate will definitely reflect on the production of manpower of that institution that will not compete favourably with other institutions in an information-driven environment. This is the pathetic situation which academic reference services had found themselves, this requires prompt measures to revolutionize this service. One of the major problem of reference librarian and users have to contend with, is poor selection of reference resources. This could be caused by poor subject knowledge of the reference and acquisition on the one hand, and the library's selection policy on the other hand as well as the use of poor and inadequate selection tools and poor access to adequate and current sources. Additionally, most reference Librarians neither have knowledge that various print and electronic data resources are available to gain needed information nor do they have a strategy by which these sources can be searched in an expedient and thorough manner. Speaking on the important role of trained librarian, Idowu (2006) concludes that the best stocked library in the world cannot give efficient and comprehensive services to its users if it does not at the same time possess a keen, efficient and highly trained staff capable of exploiting the stock to its fullest advantage. Hobson study cited in Ezeani (2004) agrees that staff performance at the library circulation and reference desk is so crucial that it often sets the services tone of any library and to a large extent influences user perception of any library. She affirms that librarians remain gate keepers to information rather than gate ways or information intermediaries and the job of the reference section is fundamental in keeping a proper image of any library.

This shows that for any library to function well, it must have trained staffs that are ready and capable of providing needed information to its clientele. Although finance is an indispensible tool for the achievement of the objective of any organization. Without adequate financial support the library cannot effectively play the role of organization and administration of collection, staff maintenance, and procurement of equipment, reference tools, satisfaction of user expectation and evaluation of services. Every library stands on three legs: its building, collections and staff. However, the tendon that holds each of those legs and ultimately binds together into a whole is money. So if the reference section of academic library is to meet up with the needs of users within the limited vote granted them, much cooperation with other libraries is inevitable. In a related view, Hobson observes that finance constitutes the greatest problem in reference sources and services in libraries. He further stressed that, inadequate funding creates an unhealthy situation for the growth and survival of any library. Though the library has its own vote like other departments in the institution, the cost of reference books/material is so high that it has become difficult to acquire new ones, and has impaired the performance of the library in providing services to its clientele. Finance is paramount to an organization as it determines the continual existence and survival of any institution and to a large extent, reference services in academic libraries, because finance can make or mar the services provided by reference section in academic libraries. In spite of development in Information Communication Technology, which has revolutionized librarianship, many of the academic libraries find it difficult in providing functional state of the art equipment.

Oketunji (2005) confirmed that application of computers to library and information activities in Nigeria has been more of dream than reality. Many libraries in Nigeria do not have access to internet facilities, despite the information age where Hi-tech information systems have pervasively influenced all fields of human endeavour, conterminous with customers, frustration and dissatisfaction. The academic community anywhere is the greatest beneficiary of Hi-tech innovation; Communication has been made easy in the area of e-mail and other postal systems, study, research and publication. The academic community should play important role of transforming the community into information society because they have the knowledge to do so. In line with the above views, Igun (2006) notes that, academic institution anywhere in developed countries have internet communication, but in developing countries academics institutions, the lecturers and students are handicapped in this area of accessibility and availability of internet facilities, the effort of the institutions and the government put into the provision of internet have not yet been reflected in educational standard of academic community. Users need serene and airy environment that promotes concentration and mental alertness. It is pertinent to note that many academic libraries in the country are too noisy for meaningful study for lack of functional fans and air conditioners. Where they exist; they are hampered by frequent power outage and absence of standby generator. In affirmation environment is also very important for reference transaction. Reference transaction should take place in a conducive environment. This can have positive impact on the user; the transaction can also be successful. Furthermore, many academic libraries lack good infrastructure such as good reading tables and chairs, shelves, catalogue cabinet, lack of adequate space for reading and housing of reading materials. These affect the smooth running of services. The reference service is an important service that requires well equipped and furnished environment that will encourage users' patronage.

Strategies for Effective Reference and Information Services Delivery in Academic Libraries: Looking at the deplorable situation of reference and information service delivery in academic libraries, there is need to develop proactive strategies to transform the present practice to a more embracing situation to encourage efficient and effective services among academic libraries in the state; this can only be achieved by adopting the following strategies: The provision of state –of –the art library and information services by academic libraries is non – negotiable. It is the basis for determining and defining the quality of study, teaching and research. The application of information communication technology to service delivery is the beginning of modern librarianship. Daniel (2000) opines that internet makes possible worldwide accessibility to information database, library catalogues, publishers" catalogue, encyclopaedias, dictionaries, public information and listings, maps, travels time tables and many other reference sources. Internet has become the magic tool in the hand of the reference librarian to promptly resolve users" puzzles and queries. Nkiko (2007) asserted that, parent institution should be educated that full computerization of their libraries enhances service delivery and acts as catalyst for knowledge growth and research expansion. It transcends mere procurement of computers. The computer must be networked, integrated and applied in the performance of routine activities. This system allows the use of online public access catalogue. ICT permits users to retrieve materials through several access points beyond the traditional author, title and subject.

Proper networking makes it possible for users to login from remote locations, thus accessing the catalogue, and making reservations without physically coming to the library building. Hence both the staff and the users should be trained to have the skill of using these technologies in retrieval of information for their study and research. This will go a long way in enhancing reference service delivery to users of academic libraries. Since knowledge is power, the users of these resources should be provided with adequate knowledge in gaining access to the wide range of resources. Academic libraries should provide access to their reference collection through improved reference services, increase exposure to library materials and improved assistance in many other ways; In relation with above view, Nkiko (2007) agrees that all heads of academic libraries must show high level of assertiveness and dynamism, persuading other policy-makers to give prominence to the teaching of use of library. It must be more practical oriented where students and staff are taught library skills, internet surfing techniques, information literacy, referencing styles, computer appreciation and general use of audio-visual equipment. For students, appropriate credit units should be earned. The trainer must of necessity be above the trainee. This imposes serious responsibility for capacity building on the reference librarians and the entire library. Therefore, full utilization of resources can only be achieved if the users of the academic library are aware of the services and the location of the resources in the library.

Another important strategy is the finance, lack of money makes impossible to maintain any form of library operations and services. Also where finance is inadequate the efficiency of the services is bound to be adversely affected. In the same vein, Igbo (2006) affirms that, finance is the bedrock of every organization, including the academic library. For libraries to achieve the objectives for which they were established, it is very important that money should be made available. This is because it is through money that procurement and processing of materials, hiring of personnel, purchasing and maintenance of equipment are made. Hence academic reference services should be supported with enough funds so as to cope with challenges of reference and information service delivery to users. Therefore, this service has to be rendered by a qualified and trained reference librarian who is equipped with the basic knowledge of reference resources, selection tools, method of acquisition, organization, preservation as well as dissemination of information to its clientele. The quality of staff usually reflects quality of services provided. The personnel must be professionally competent and motivated to provide efficient services. Ezeani (2004) asserts that, the public service librarians are the image makers, the frontline staff whom people first get in contact with in the library. Therefore, their personality can to a large extent make or mar the image of the library. She further stated that, reference librarian must be a positive and gregarious person. He or she must be friendly; progressive minded and must have the ability to communicate effectively. In a swift reaction, Nikko (2007) opines that academic library should ensure that specialists are allowed to man the reference services. When a person with good mastery of a subject helps students and staff for literature search and other subject specific issues, the likelihood of comprehensiveness, depth and finesse will be assured. Users feel at home with somebody who understands their professional concepts and nuances. This make for mutual respect and appreciation. In the same vein, Madu (2008) advocates that, reference librarian should be well educated.

This means the possession of a professional qualification. In Nigeria a reference librarian is expected to hold a bachelor degree in library and information science, with this qualification the reference librarian would have learnt the basics of information acquisition, organization, management and dissemination. A higher degree like the master's degree in library and information science is an added advantage. These show that the reference librarian in an academic library should have professionalized knowledge, personal intelligence, and vast knowledge of resources will enhance better reference service delivery in academic libraries. The space and physical facilities are other crucial strategies the library building should be appropriate to accommodate the services rendered to the users, the citing of photocopying sections should be in a place easily accessible to users, the library should be air conditioned, fans and well ventilated. The table and chairs provided should match well. A situation where by the chairs provided would either be too high or too low for the tables should be avoided, shelves, good cabinets, and rug, all these will enhance better and enhanced reference services in academic library in the state.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts the quantitative research with emphasis on descriptive survey research. Most quantitative research falls into two areas: studies of events and studies aimed at discovering inferences or casual relationships. Descriptive studies are aimed at finding out "what is, "so observational while descriptive survey methods are frequently used to collect descriptive data. The population of the study consists of reference staff and student users of the academic libraries in Federal University Libraries Lafia. All reference staff under study as well as a total of 1,361 undergraduate students who are duly registered with the libraries of the institutions serves as the population for the study. Due to the small number of respondent involved, the entire population of both reference and other library staff in the institutions was used for the study. For the registered users' population, a total of 139 were used for the study. The sampling technique used here is the proportionate Stratified Sampling. According to Anaekwe (2007) this technique divides the population into strata (sub-population). After division, the random sampling is done on each stratum to select the needed sample size. This technique is more appropriate because of the nature of population of reference and information users of the intuitions for the study i.e. their categorization into different levels of study. The questionnaire was used to generate data for the study. The questionnaires were constructed by the researcher based on the research questions earlier formulated to guide the study. Two sets of questionnaire were used; one for reference staff and the other for the registered users. That of reference staff was titled "Reference and Information Services Questionnaire (RISQFRS) for reference staff while that of registered users was "Reference and Information Services Questionnaire (RISQFU) for users". The major difference between the users and staff questionnaire was the background questions bothered on the Name of institution, department and year of the study. To ensure acceptability two senior colleagues validated the instrument. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the reference staff by the researchers. A total of 7 Copies of the questionnaire was administered to the reference staff all of which were returned and 139 to the users, with 120 returned given a total numbers of 127 as sample size. The data obtained through the questionnaire were presented in tables and

analyzed using frequency, simple percentage and mean. The researchers considered the average mean of 2.50 and above accepted, while any item scored below the average was rejected. The score of 2.50 was calculated using the weightings attached to the response options of: Very often/strongly agree - 4, Often/ Agree-3, Less Often/Disagree-2, Not Often/Strongly Disagree-1

Hence 4+3+2+14.4=2.50

Data Presentation and Analysis: Table 1 above shows that current Awareness service, selective dissemination of Information, Indexing Services and Abstracting Services constitute the reference services often rendered in the libraries. They have overall mean of 3.16, 3.09, 2.82 and 2.74 respectively. Inter-library loan Services, referral services, and on-line Information retrieval services are less often rendered as they each score below the acceptable average of 2.50. Each of these scores are therefore rejected (R). The staff response follows the same trend with the users mean scores. Current Awareness Services and selective dissemination of information remains the services most often rendered. In Table 2 Majority of user respondents agreed on dictionaries and encyclopaedias as the most widely available resources for reference and information services in the libraries. All the other resources fall above the average of 50%t except on-line catalogue which is 58.4%. All or 100% of the staff respondents agreed on dictionaries, encyclopaedias, directions, bibliographies, indexes and maps as being available as reference sources. However, none agreed on online catalogue as being available for reference services hence the zero percentage. Some respondents added year book and gazettes as part of the resources. From the observation checklist of resources available for reference services in the institutions, electronic sources are not available in any of the institutions. In addition, for Certificate of Educational Achievement (COEA), periodicals and geographical sources were also absent.

From Table 3 the overall mean scores among users, only the method of data base searches falls below the average scores being 2.47. The highest overall mean scores are 2.82, 2.79 and 2.77 for information and referral services, current awareness services and bibliographic verification respectively. For the staff scores, only three are below the average of 2.50 with the highest being 3.28 on library orientation/institution. The least however is 1.57 against Data base searches. From the above table 4, users' means scores are all above the average score of 2.50. It shows that users all agreed on the items being hindrances to reference services. The highest scores are 3.10, 3.06, 3.04, and 3.05 for, poor infrastructures, insufficient reference materials and outdate reference materials, and inadequate opening hours respectively. Staff did not agreed on this assertion staff indifference, inadequate opening hours and poor publicity of reference materials as hindrances to reference services. These attract scores of 2.14, 2.29 and 2.29 respectively. The highest means scores however inadequate ICT facilities are and outdate reference materials with 3.43, each and inadequate funding, poor infrastructures, insufficient reference materials, and inadequate trained personnel each of which attract 3.28. In the entire scores in Table 5 above, none of the scores falls below the average mean. The highest scores on the side of users however, are 3.17 on provision of adequate infrastructure, 3.12 on improved funding and employment qualified reference personnel. The staffs' means scores are consistently higher, with the highest scores being 3.57 against

improved funding, provision of adequate infrastructure and purchase of adequate reference materials.

Discussion of the Findings: The findings in this research have been discussed based on the structure of the questionnaire which as earlier noted was constructed in line with the research objectives and research question.

Provision of Reference and Information Services: Data collected and analysed along this line shows that current Awareness Services rank the most often provided services from the perspectives of both users and staff. It is no surprise that it is followed by selective Dissemination of Information in both instances, given their close relationship. That student users attest to these indicates that these services are offered to both students and staff users. This is very important as it would go a long way to enhance the study and research endeavours of these groups of users. These services are attested to earlier in Edoka (2000) and Madu (2008). Indexing service and Abstracting services are shown to be provided often in the institutions. Furthermore, abstracts to the articles would help the user decide whether to consult the full text or not. This saves invaluable time of users. Another important service often carried out in the institutions is reprographic service. This is more compelling given the reserved nature of the materials. Photocopying facilities reduce mutilation of books and theft to the barest minimum; it also generates revenue to the library. However, the equipment and services should be arranged in such a way as not to distract other users in the section. Users' instruction service is shown to be provided often. This is a welcome development because no matter the quality and quantity of reference materials, they are valueless if they cannot be accessed by users for whom they are meant. Reference sources are particularly special and needs special instruction to be able to maximize their use.

Resources for reference and Information Services: The list of reference resources in table 3 shows that only on-line catalogues are not readily available in the libraries. Dictionaries attract the highest percentages followed by encyclopaedia and then maps. This result is not a surprise as these are the resources that readily come to mind when reference services or section is mentioned. It is also an indication that the two are the most consulted by users. All reference staff is agreed on the employment of and availability of the dictionaries, encyclopaedias, directories, biographies, periodicals, indexes and maps for reference services. On-line catalogue attracts abysmal percentage, in fact, among the staff respondents it is zero percent. The complete absence of on-line catalogue is an indication of lack of electronic resources in the libraries, and that leaves much to be desired. It shows that the libraries, particularly their reference sections are cut off from the information super highway which has democratized access to information around the world. Today emphasis has shifted from owning to accesses to information. Academic libraries in Nasarawa state must exploit man's most impactful invention of all time-the internet –otherwise they stand the risk of being left behind if they are not already there. Reference and information services in institutions of higher learning are too crucial to run entirely on the manual platform. Information technology has no doubt revolutionized access to information in libraries. Users now search databases with the use of on-line catalogue terminals which are conspicuously absent in Nigeria. The implication of this for their reference services is that information search cannot be provided effectively, reference

questions cannot be answered quickly and satisfactorily, worse still reference staff would appear irrelevant to the needs of users.

Methods used for Reference and Information Service delivery: Data analysed on above subject matter reveals that library orientation/instruction and ready reference questions are the most popular methods used for reference and information service delivery. These are attested to by both users and staff alike. Library orientations when effectively carried out go a long way to ease the burden and pressure of prospective users could bring to bear on the reference libraries/staff. This is because the user, rather than asking question at every turn has the know-how to help him out in some areas without bothering the staff. Ready-reference Questions is very common service in academic libraries and require quick answers, hence staff of these very important sections of the library are supposed to be conversant with the reference tools required to answer these questions. The places of library instruction and ready-reference have been earlier highlighted in Edoka (2002), Ifidon (2008) and Madu (2008). Both groups of respondents also agreed on the use of bibliographic verification and current Awareness services. These methods are most likely to be explored by academic staff and researcher. It is often used to keep them aware of current developments in their areas of specializations.

A contradiction exists in the responses of users and staff on the use of fax, telephone, E-mail and Internet for reference service delivery. While users agreed to their use, staff disagreed. Previous findings, including the observation checklist have revealed a dearth of electronic sources in the reference section of the libraries, therefore their uses, and except for telephone is highly unlikely. The respondents however agreed on the non-use of data base searches. With the use of computers and telecommunication in information handling, reference service delivery has undergone dramatic and radical changes especially with the methods employed and the services used. This has no doubt resulted in effective search and efficient delivery for libraries that have embraced the technology. Indeed, modern reference services now involved the use of fax, e-mail and the internet while the face to face encounter with library users is being rapidly faced out.

Hindrances to Effective Reference Services: It was earlier established among users that reference and information services in academic libraries in Nasarawa State are not effective. In table 4, each of the phenomenon listed as possible hindrances to reference services was accented to as such by both users and staff except that the letter disagreed with, staff indifference and inadequate opening hours being among the hindrances. Inadequate funding has remained a most irrepressible monster among the hindrances to effective reference services. Most other factors are directly or indirectly linked to poor funding. To start with, even the parent institutions themselves do not fare better as they are also cash strapped. The trend often is that libraries funding is done at the whims and caprices of schools management. Regrettably, reference materials are very expensive and their costs are rising by the year against dwindling library subvention.
This has made most academic libraries to stock out dated materials in their reference sections to the detriment of users. Even the staffs themselves attest to being inadequately trained. As important as current reference materials and sufficient infrastructures are, they are dormant without adequately

trained and motivated staff. The academic and professional quality of reference staff in the institutions are laid bare hence the need for further training was expressed, in consonance with Ezeani (2004) and Idowu (2006). It is earlier noted that the academic community anywhere is the greatest beneficiary of hi-tech innovation, particularly information and communication but that in many developing countries, including Nigeria, many lecturers and students are handicapped in this era of availability of internet facilities. The problem is confirmed in the study as posited earlier in Oyesika (2004) and Nkiko (2006). Earlier finding in this study shows that library orientation is executed often in the libraries studied. How it perhaps stands as hindrance to effective reference service is the manner it is organized. Many academic libraries carry out library orientation as a mere casual routine, carried out for new students en-mass and in standing position. As earlier posited, there is need to properly articulate and execute user instruction services among all category of users to ensure effective library services in general and reference service in particular. Special attention should also be given to users with special needs. This is the hallmark of reference and information services. Well planned and executed library orientation would correct the anomaly in these regard expressed in Nkiko (2006).

Strategies for Effective Reference and Information Services: The data analysed and presented in table 5 presented a number of strategies for improving reference services as acceded to by respondents. The measures are improved funding, adequate, publicity of reference sources, introduction of compulsory user education to staff and students, provision of adequate infrastructure, purchase of current and adequate reference materials, employment of qualified reference personnel, application of ICT facilities to reference services, formulation of well-defined reference policy and training and retraining opportunities to be provided for reference librarians. The importance of employment of qualified personnel to undertake reference services cannot be over-emphasized. This is because the quality of services rendered by a reference librarian is directly proportional to the professional training and other competencies developed. Such competencies include adequate computer literacy, acquisition of information communication technology skill, communication ability and other personal traits. The researcher fully aligns with the views of Nkiko (2006) and Madu (2008) on the qualification and competences and personalities of the reference librarian earlier advanced. The search for information is assuming dimension whereby an information user is increasingly becoming conscious of an individualized approach. In this regard, the user wants a personalized access to information without much assistance from the reference librarian. This approach can be easily realized by the use of computerized sources, which unfortunately is lacking in the institutions studied. The traditional information sources like encyclopaedias, dictionaries, directories etc. cannot provide the above opportunity. Though computerized sources may not out rightly replace print formats, it is wise to maintain the two side by side. The consequences of remaining in the purely manual domain have been highlighted earlier in the work. The potentialities and impact of electronic sources in reference and information services are also captured in Daniel (2000) and Nkiko (2006). Library management of tertiary institution in Nasarawa State must review their reference policies to embrace computerized sources of information. Respondents also agreed that introduction of compulsory user education to

staff and student users would enhance effective reference and information services. There are graduate from tertiary institutions who did know what reference sources are. The practical modality recommended in Nkiko (2006) should be adopted for effective user's education. Special training and retraining opportunities should be provided for reference librarians. This will ensure necessary competences for them to face realities on the job rather than depending on more or less theoretical classroom experience. Resource person for such training could be gotten from or within outside the library and the training could be in-house, external or both staff training programmes could help to achieve the competences expressed in Ezeani (2004) and Idowu (2006).

Findings

In summary, the major findings of the study are as follows:

- Current Awareness Service, Selective Dissemination of Information, Indexing Service and Abstracting Services are the major reference services recorded in the institutions.
- Only online catalogue is not available for as part of the reference resources in the libraries.
- Ready Reference Questions, Library Orientation/Institution, Bibliographic verification and current Awareness services constitute the major methods used for reference and information service delivery.
- While reference staffs agreed on the effectiveness of reference and information services in the libraries, users" positions are to the contrary.
- Major hindrances to reference services are inadequate funding, poor infrastructures, out-dated reference materials, insufficient reference materials and inadequate ICT facilities.
- Leading strategies for improved reference and information services include; improved funding, provision of adequate infrastructure, purchase of adequate reference materials, employment of qualified reference personnel and introduction of compulsory user education.

Conclusion

The reference librarians are expected to harness information from reference sources and make them available in the most suitable form for users. These services would in turn impact positively on the study and research performances of patrons, thus leading to the achievement of the institutions main objectives. The study would help the reference librarian to improve in their services to their patrons. For enhanced services, reference librarians must of necessity develop themselves not only academically in the profession, but must embrace relevant skills like the computer literacy and ICT competences. For library administrations of institutions of higher learning, it could be gleaned from the study that poor funding, inadequate and out-dated reference sources constitute major hindrances to effective reference and information services.
Efforts should be intensified to reverse these factors as anything to the contrary impedes effective reference services. The government must encourage institutions of higher learning which it sets up to achieve its purpose. One major way is by adequate provision of funds and monitoring of such funds to

ensure that the libraries receive their due allocation to enhance reference and information services.

Recommendation

Based on the findings derived from the study, the following recommendations have been drawn.

- Reference librarians/staff should be encouraged to pursue higher levels of education and attain higher professional skills.
- Library management should enter into inter-library loan service, online services and referrals services. These will ensure a robust reference services to users
- Regular evaluation of reference and information services should be carried out in the Libraries. This would result in an improved service delivery.
- Library management should sue for improved funding of the library with the school management as well as explore other avenues of revenue generation to supplement their allocations.
- Efforts should be made to stock the reference sections with adequate current materials for effective reference services.
- Library management should plan and execute a practically oriented instruction to staff and student's users.
- ICT Facilities must of necessity be acquired and introduced to reference services for best results
- Reference librarians /staff should be adequately equipped with relevant ICT competences that would place them to meet the current information challenges.
- The reference environment should be properly arranged to ensure adequate comfort for users and staff.
- There should be a formulation of a well-defined reference and information policy.

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