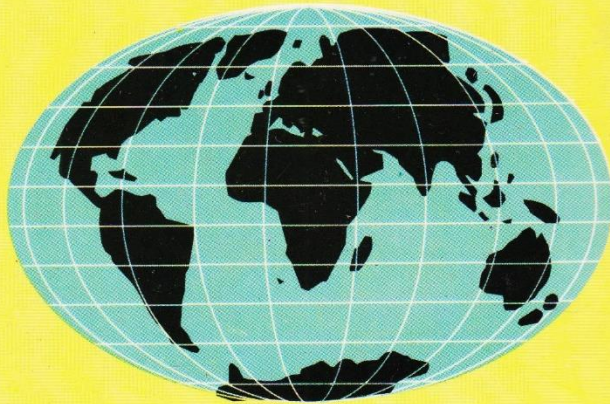




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Effect of Currency of Law Reports on Utilisation and Users' Satisfaction in University Libraries of Uyo and Calabar

Mboutidem Umoh Esq.

Abstract

The study investigated the relationship between Currency of Law Reports on utilisation and users' satisfaction in University libraries of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State and Calabar, Cross River State. Ex-post facto research design was used for the study. The sample consisted of 285 users, comprising 194 year 5 law undergraduate students, 39 postgraduate students and 52 law teachers of the two institutions during the 2009/2010 academic session. Data was obtained using questionnaire titled "Currency of Law Reports and Users' Satisfaction Questionnaire (CLRUSQ). The data obtained was subjected to statistical analysis using percentage, weighted mean scores and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The null hypothesis was tested at .05 level of significance. The result revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between currency of law reports and users' satisfaction. Based on the findings it was recommended, among others, that law librarians should ensure that the law library is mainly stocked with current law reports as they contain present state of the law and would lead to high level of utilisation and this would in turn result in the satisfaction of users.

Introduction

The Law library is a special library which caters specifically for a special group of people namely the Law students, Law teachers, lawyers, judges, and other legal researchers. Law libraries have been divided into several categories among them are legislative libraries, Ministry of Justice libraries, judiciary libraries, Law office libraries and academic Law libraries of which that of Calabar and Uyo are being studied here.

The University of Uyo Law library stocks both primary and secondary information resources such as law reports, statute books, treatises, codes, hansards, gazettes as well as textbooks, journals, dissertations and projects alongside other computer peripherals such as CD-ROMs, tapes for use. It has computers, which have full internet services and there is a current subscription to lexis-nexis academic, west-law international and Hein online, which come highly recommended by both National Universities Commission (NUC) and Council of Legal Education (CLE).

Utilisation of law library resources is based on adequacy (Ranganathan, 1998; Waples, 1993). Standard academic Law libraries like those of University of Uyo and Calabar provide essential services like provision of reading lists, orientation of fresh undergraduate students, Current Awareness Service (CAS), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), assistance to users in search of information, among others.

All these services aim at producing quality library services to users thereby enhancing the effective utilisation of the library resources, one of which is the law reports. According to Anaeme (2008), law reports are published accounts of cases decided upon by the law courts having jurisdiction over such matters. A law report consists of over 800 pages depending on the number of decided cases reported therein. The importance of law reports cannot be over-emphasised as it is very crucial to the basic process of knowing the current position of law. The legal profession thrives on books and derives its substance from the power of the written work; and one of such is the law report which users of the law library are heavily dependent on. Without law reports, law students and academic lawyers would perform below standard both in class and in the law courts. Clinch (2001) acknowledges the importance of law reports by stating that "law reports are a primary source of law as it comprises original and authoritative statements of law". On the other hand, users' satisfaction is an innate expression of contentment by the library user, especially when his needs are adequately met by the library's information resources for example, current law reports. It is against this background that this study sought to investigate the relationship between the effect of currency of law reports on utilisation and users satisfaction in University libraries of Uyo and Calabar.

Statement of the Problem

It is a widely acknowledged fact that no law faculty can successfully train law undergraduates and graduates without having in place a well stocked library which has a good policy on acquisition, retrieval and dissemination of legal information. Authors such as Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) and Utor, (2004) agree that the library is the heart of the university and the latter goes further to state that it is a basic principle of legal education that the library is the heart of the law school that provides faculty members with materials for research and study. However, the reverse maybe the case where a law library is not performing at optimal level in terms of provision of available legal resources such as law reports. The crucial role of primary sources of information has been emphasised in the academic performance of law students and the dangers of law students confining themselves to only secondary sources has been highlighted (Sanni, 2006). However, the high demand and effective utilisation of these law reports would depend on their currency. This is the focal point of this study.

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis was formulated for this study;

- There is no significant relationship between currency of law reports and utilisation and users' satisfaction in University Libraries of Uyo and Calabar.

Literature Review

With the present day information explosion, a collection does not need to be filled with old editions of information materials. The satisfaction of a user with the collection of an academic library depends on how current the materials are. According to National Universities Commission (1999), currency in library collections is considered as follows:

- Books and journals that are not more than five years old from date of publication are considered as very current.
- Books and journals that are between six to ten years old from date of publication are considered as fairly current.
- Books and journals that are more than ten years old from date of publication are considered as not current.

It can be seen that currency implies presentation of recent findings in the various fields and it is a criteria for evaluating all books, especially scientific and technical books, where developments occur rapidly leading to new discoveries (Ifidon 2006). In addition, strathcona county library (222) advised that contemporary materials representing various points of view which are of current interest and possible future significance, including materials, which reflect current conditions, trends and controversies be acquired for library use. In broad terms, currency is a measure of a library collection's quality and it is important in determining user satisfaction.

Udoh (2003), in a study of lecturers' perception and utilization of academic libraries, found that non-current materials were negatively perceived, meaning that users were

not satisfied. Some respondents even described the library as a book museum. This situation was earlier observed by Dipeolu (1998) where the author studied survival strategies for university libraries in the 21st century. Dipeolu observed moribund, outdated and decrepit nature of collection in university libraries. Olorunsola (1995), Balarabe (1995) and Adeoti – Adekeye (1999) made the same observations and recommended that libraries should be replenished to meet the current needs and satisfaction of users.

Akhidime (2002), in a study of the Nigerian university environment, used the criterion performance model which the author described as a good model based on Committee of University Libraries proceedings (CULNU, 1983). The performance of the Nigerian universities ranged from 1.82% to 2.98% on a scale of 1-5. The findings showed mean performance of 2.75. The performance was below average. The major contributing factor was lack of current materials in the collection. Ajibero (1998), Okiy (2004), and Oyediran – Tidings (2004) made the same observation. These researchers lamented that lack of current collections resulted in user dissatisfaction and low patronage, which invariably affected the output.

In the case of law reports, this criteria of currency does not apply in its totality in all instances because there are some decided cases which are relevant and have become a foundation for subsequent cases which comprise the same set of legal issues and principles; such cases are classified under the Latin maxim “locus classicus”. The above view is

supported by Blunt (1980) who posited that law books do not fall into disuse simply because they are old even though lawyers are much concerned with recent decisions as they inform the users of newer decisions and over-ruled judgments. Consequently, weeding of law reports is done sparingly so as to create space for newer law reports.

Another point concerning the uniqueness of law reports is the fact that the basic consideration laid down by the National Universities Commission does not apply to law reports. This is because what is considered as currency of law reports is the date when judgment was given in the cases reported in the law report. Thus, a user when citing the case, cites the year when judgment was given and not the date of publication of the law report. From the literature above, it has been shown that users satisfaction is more assured with current information resources of which law reports is a part, yet the importance of the older law reports (locus classicus) cannot be undermined.

Research Methodology

Ex-post facto design was used for the study. The population of this study comprised 285 registered library users; 194 final year undergraduate law students; 39 postgraduate law students and 52 law lecturers (University of Uyo 2010; University of Calabar 2010).

The entire population of 285 targeted library users in the two universities served as the study sample. Purposive sampling technique was used in the study. The instrument for

data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled: Currency of Law Reports and Users' Satisfaction Questionnaire (CLRUSQ) designed to collect relevant data on currency of Law Reports on utilisation and users' satisfaction in the two universities. The scores generated were used in determining the relationship between currency of Law reports on utilisation and users' satisfaction with the available law reports in the two universities.

However, out of the 285 copies of the questionnaire distributed only 280 users returned properly completed questionnaires. Hence, there was a 98.2% return of the instrument. Data obtained from the completed and valid copies of the questionnaire were analysed using percentages, weighted mean scores and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) analysis (PPMC). Pearson Product Moment Correlation was chosen since the study sought to determine the relationship between currency of Law reports and utilisation and users' satisfaction in the two universities. The hypothesis formulated was tested at .05 level of significance.

Research Questions

The following research question was asked to guide the study:

- What is the relationship between currency of Law reports and utilisation and users' Satisfaction in University Libraries of Uyo and Calabar?

This question was answered using the results in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean (X), Standard Deviation (S) and Correlation Coefficient (r) for Currency of Law Reports and Users' Satisfaction

Variables	X	SD	Item mean	r
Currency of law reports	16.78	3.28	4.19	0.49
User's satisfaction	16.86	4.07		

N = 285

The value of r (0.49) shows that currency of law reports has positive relationship with utilisation and users' satisfaction and the value of the item mean (4.19) indicates that the respondents were in strong agreement with the items on the average.

Testing of Hypothesis

Table 2: Summary of PPMC Analysis of Scores on Currency of Law Reports and Utilisation and Users' Satisfaction

Variables	$\sum X$	$\sum X^2$	$\sum XY$	r-cal	df	r-crit	Decision
	$\sum Y$	$\sum Y^2$					
Currency of law reports	4782	83582	82922	.49	278	.11	s
Users' satisfaction	4804	84112					

S = Significant at p < .05 alpha

The results in Table 2 show that the observed correlation index, *r-cal*, for the relationship between currency of law reports and utilisation and users' satisfaction in University libraries of Uyo and Calabar is 0.49 while its corresponding table value, *r-crit*, at *df* 278 and 0.05 alpha, is 0.11. The *r-cal*, 0.49, is greater than the *r-crit*, 0.11. This finding shows that the *r-cal* is statistically significant at $p < .05$ alpha. In other words, there is a significant positive relationship between currency of law reports and utilisation and users' satisfaction in University libraries of Uyo and Calabar. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion of Findings

On the relationship between currency of law reports and utilisation and users' satisfaction, the results in Table 2 showed that there is a positive significant relationship between currency of law reports and utilisation and users' satisfaction in University libraries of Uyo and Calabar. This led to the rejection of the null hypothesis which guided this study- There is no significant relationship between currency of law reports and utilisation and users' satisfaction in university libraries of Uyo and Calabar. This therefore implies that the law reports collection in the law library should be regularly updated with newer law reports added to its collection quarterly so as to ensure the continuous satisfaction of its users which in this case refers to the law postgraduate, undergraduate students and the law teachers. This observation agrees with the collective views of Ajibero

(1998), Okiy (2004), and Oyediran – Tidings (2004). These researchers lamented the fact that lack of current collections resulted in user dissatisfaction and low patronage which invariably affected the output. Therefore, it can be emphasised that the utilisation of current law reports is an important pre-requisite in bringing about and sustaining the satisfaction of the library users.

However, it must be stated that this criteria of currency does not apply in all instances to law reports because those old decided cases which are still relevant usually become a foundation for subsequent cases which are comprised of the same set of legal issues and principles; such cases are generally classified under the Latin maxim *locus classicus*. The above view is supported by Blunt (1980) who posited that law books do not fall into disuse simply because they are old even though lawyers are much concerned with recent decisions. From the findings so far, it has been observed that there is a significant positive relationship between currency of law reports on utilisation and users' satisfaction with them.

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings and interpretations in this study, it is concluded that currency of Law reports is a significant determinant of users' satisfaction in universities' law libraries.

Consequent upon the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

- Periodic additions of current law reports to the stock of

the law library should be done consciously by the Law librarian as its utilisation would ensure sustained users' satisfaction.

- Law librarians should identify and acquire both foreign and local law reports which are in high demand as this would lead to increased patronage and utilisation.
- Academic Law libraries should be computerised and networked accordingly as this would enable users access and utilise both relevant local and foreign law reports in electronic formats from participating Law libraries.

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