# EVALUATION OF CUSTOMER CARE SERVICES AND STRATEGIES OF KASHIM IBRAHIM LIBRARY, AHMADU BELLO UNIVERSITY, ZARIA

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**Abstract -** *This study was carried out to investigate customer care services and strategies in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, and Zaria. To achieve this objective, the researcher raised the following research objectives: To find out who are the customers in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria? To determine if the library has a customer policy in Kashim Ibrahim Library? To determine the extent at which the customers are aware of information products and services in Kashim Ibrahim Library? Survey Research Method was adopted for the study and structured questionnaire were used for data collection. 200 sets of questionnaire were issued to the respondents and the study observed that familiarity of information products and services is triggered by the currency of information resources for user needs. It is noted that currency of information brings stability and use of information resources as it makes the library user-friendly to the library customers. It was then recommended that that the library management increases its budget in order to afford buying what would stimulate the use of the library by its users.*

**Key words:** Customers of the library, customer care services, strategies of kashim Ibrahim library, history of kashim Ibrahim library.

## 1.INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt library in academic institution has assisted in academic intellectual output of students and staff. It is considered to be the most essential facility need in any academic environment especially in providing support to enhance teaching and research. **Nwalo (2000)** observed that no system of education is complete without well-equipped libraries, with services that was operated either directly through contact with students (readers' services) or indirectly through activities carried out "behind the scene" (technical services)[1].

A library attached to a university, college or any educational institution is known as an academic library. Academic libraries differ from a public library or a special library in purpose and services. The main function of an academic library is to serve as an auxiliary to a parent institution in carrying out its objectives. The library is an important intellectual resource of the academic community, and helps them to fulfill the curriculum requirements and to promote studies and research. **Rathinasabapathy (2005) [2].** Believed that in an academic community, librarianship is very important in terms of the role the library is expected to

play. It is a critical supportive avenue where students and staff of that institution were provided with useful and needed resources in order to support their activities of academic excellent and research.

**Kothari (2001)** were of the view that the importance of librarianship cannot be overemphasized by pointing out that academic libraries should provide facilities and services necessary for the success of all formal programs of instruction, open the door to the world of knowledge that lies beyond the boundaries of one field of study, and bring books, students, and scholars together under conditions which encourage reading for pleasure, self-discovery, personal growth, and the sharpening of intellectual intelligence. Therefore, the academic library has to build a strong collection of information resources in physical and digital formats to cater for the knowledge requirements of students, faculty members, research scholars, and scientists of the academic institution **[3].**

Customer care is an activity that allows customers to make direct contact with an organization to give comments on products and their services. **(Brassington and Pettitt 2000)[4].** they all believed that customer care is a customer service that seeks to acquire new customers, provides superior customer satisfaction, and builds customer loyalty. Further, they add that customer care has to do with good customer relations so that their expectations on products and services will produce the benefits and standard promised. As a result of that, they note that libraries are expected to treat customers like Kings to ensure that all the information resources are used for the benefit of the community. It is widely believed that customers prefer speed, ease of access, personal attention, convenience, or simply the lack of disappointment that they perceive to be available in the private sector (Brassington and Pettitt 2000).

Studies by **Hisle (2000)** suggest that academic librarians are there to shape and change their services to further improve learning and research problems faced by customers/ users. The two authors note that the role of a library in an academic environment is to maintain the importance and relevance of the academic library as a place of intellectual stimulation and a center of activity on campus. The author point out that academic libraries support new users in providing them with appropriate services and resources, whether they are distance education students or those involved in new teaching and learning methods. He

warn that the organizational patterns of academic libraries are thought to be a barrier in providing students with access to instructions and information appropriate to their educational style, and this will distance a lot of users from attending the library[5].

According to **Clair (1993)** any organization that is not committed to providing expectations of customer's point of view will not survive as most of them are intellectuals. He further points out that, important issues to be considered when taking care of customers include; giving customers accurate and reliable information; offer high quality service that is easily accessible and easily approachable service providers[6].



**Figure: 1 Brief history of Kashim Ibrahim library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria**

The library was established in 1962, the University Library System of Ahmadu Bello University comprises the Kashim Ibrahim Library (the main Library) and eleven other satellite libraries located in different campuses of the University. The Library has a total holding of over 1.2 million volumes of books and 66,000 periodical titles. The University library has always been at the centre of research and scholarship playing a major role in acquiring, processing and lending library materials and responding to patrons inquires. Today, online database and internet searches are a common feature among staff and students of the University. The library management in the past few years has been striving to upgrade the IT skills of the staff to enable them cope with challenges of the information age. Recently, thanks mostly to donations by the MacArthur Foundation and the Carnegie Corporation, rapid progress has been made not only in updating the collection, but also in automating the resources and services of the Library system. Today, online and CD-ROM searches are a common feature among staff and students of the University. With staff strength of 42 professionals and 109 Para-professionals, 22 Senior and 102 junior non-professional staff in the entire university library system, the library management is striving to upgrade the IT skills of the staff to enable them cope with challenges of the information age.

## 2.STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

A library's fundamental purpose has always been to support the process of research and education by helping users find information and ascertain its value. In any academic institution, it is expected that the library provide opportunities for librarians to serve users in different ways, for example, by providing more in-depth consultation to research questions or hosting new types of tools that enable users to guide themselves in specialized disciplines. The demonstrable value of academic libraries and their staff must increasingly reside in the guidance they provide as well as the technical infrastructures they develop and maintain. Furthermore, the library performs the role of enhancing the creation of new academic communities on campus. One of the most vital advantages of an academic library is space. It is often observed that the library inhabits the most desirable real estate on any college or university campus. Geographically and symbolically, it occupies the centre of a community established to support the advancement and perpetuation of knowledge. The positioning of the library conveys a sense of intellectual common ground, a setting in which knowledge from a range of disciplines comes together in a single place. Known as a place of gathering and collection, the library embodies core academic values reflected in the domains of knowledge that faculty and students pursue. As a physical structure and hub of interaction, the library affirms the value of sustained inquiry in particular fields and at the same time it affirms the need to understand knowledge as a whole.

Academic libraries exist to serve the learning needs of students, academics, researchers, the community and those people mandated to use it. Academic libraries are expected to make sure that all services and products available are well known to its users and that its customers' needs are well catered. Experience has shown that service providers, for instance librarians that are reluctant to associate themselves with customers end up having no users and books lie on shelves unread because information products and services are not marketed to the clients, whose needs are not normally known and satisfied. It is noted that customer care has transformed the way in which organizations provide products and services to their clients, role of advertising, and importance of customer care in a business. It is assumed that if tertiary institution libraries can take into considerations the importance of customers, the use of resources can tremendously improve.

From preliminary observation by the researcher, the users of the Kashim Ibrahim Library seldom use the resources of the library as most of them come to the library looking for reading spaces during the exams, staff of the institution have also abandoned the library for the Internet. Perhaps an assessment of customer care services in the library will provide an insight into the cause of the aforementioned state of events.

## 3.OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

The following are the objectives of this study:

- ➢ To find out the customers of Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.
- ➢ To determine if the Library has a customer care policy.
- ➢ To determine the extent at which the customers are aware of Information Products and Services of the library.

## 4.SCOPE OF STUDY: LIMITATIONS

This study covers the customer services unit/section of the Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, and Zaria.

This study is limited in the areas of time, cost and resources. The researcher had no money to cover all the libraries in the Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria Library Complex.

## 5.REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This part reviews literature considered related to this area of study. To achieve this review exhaustively, it will be presented under the following subheadings:

- ➢ Roles of Academic Library
- ➢ Customers of an academic Library
- ➢ Customer care Policy structure
- ➢ Customer care products in the library
- ➢ Roles of Academic Libraries

Libraries plays vital roles in every academic environment, libraries must come to define and fulfill a reconfigured set of roles for serving their institutions. To be sure, some elements of the future have the familiar cast of tradition as libraries continue to support the core research and educational purposes of the academy. To act on these core purposes in today's academic environment, however, requires that libraries move beyond parameters of earlier times to pursue new modes of serving their institutions(Rajendran and Rathinasabapathy, 2005)[7].

They also maintained that the role of academic libraries should, among others, broaden the catalogue of resources in support of academic inquiry and discovery. A library's fundamental purpose has always been to support the process of research and education by helping users find information and ascertain its value. In any academic institution, it is expected that the library provide opportunities for librarians to serve users in different ways, for example, by providing more in-depth consultation to research questions or hosting new types of tools that enable users to guide themselves in specialized disciplines. The demonstrable value of academic libraries and their staff must increasingly reside in the guidance they provide as well as the technical infrastructures they develop and maintain. Furthermore, the library performs the role of enhancing the creation of new academic communities on campus. **Monyata (2004)** over the past few years, the Web has had a tremendous effect on the growth of information and the speed of transmission. The problem with the Web, though, is that there is no real organization of information like that in libraries. New means to deliver information over the Web places a challenge to academic librarians in terms of helping students make sense of information found on websites[8].

As information and research resources become more varied, it places a challenge on academic libraries. **Hazen (2000)** argued that the changes in the nature of information, in research strategies, and in the structure of higher education are affecting academic libraries. These changes define much of the shifting context within which academic libraries must operate [9]. The changes brought by electronic media necessitate transformation in the way librarians think about their jobs.

## CUSTOMERS OF AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY:

According to **Poll (2003) and Sinunonds, Andaleed and Sead (2001)** academic libraries are described as the "heart" of the learning community, providing a place for students and faculty to do their research and advance their knowledge. Libraries provide numerous services to users, addressing their diverse needs, characteristics and interests[10]. **Mgobozi (2002)** reminds us that academic libraries serve specialized needs of the students and staff. Studies by the **University of Otago Library (2002)** notes that academic libraries support and promote the mission and goals of the University as they relate to the library. They support and promote current and anticipated research and teaching at the university through the library's function[11]. They affirm the role of the library as a partner with academic departments in pursuit of knowledge and of the University's educational goal. They ensure that decisions made in the library are informed by the interest of the user community. The University of Otago Library (2002) affirms that because academic library users have varying needs and expectations, it is the responsibility of the library staff to know needs and strive to meet users. Providing quality services in academic libraries is a major issue among academic librarians.

Libraries are expected provide and access to service quality than just a physical place.

## CUSTOMER CARE POLICY STRUCTURE:

Studies by Royal Borough of Windsor and **Maidenhead (2002)** clarify that library policy covers all aspects of accessibility to library services. These include location, opening hours, physical access, furniture and equipment, stock and services, access to staff and adequate space; and set the standards against which individual users and communities can measure their needs, rights and expectations. According to the Empowerment International Customer Care Policy (2001) customer care policy is all about solving problems and delivering quality services and products to users. **Empowerment International Customer Care Policy (2001),** The University of Hull Academic Services Libraries (2002) and Jordan hill Library- Customer Care Policy (2000) point out that libraries are committed to customer satisfaction policy to ensure that a library:

➢ Provides a service, which is friendly, helpful and responsive to customer needs.
➢ Provides the fullest possible service at all times, within the constraints of available resources.
➢ Creates a pleasant and welcoming environment in which users can work.
➢ Makes available materials and information resources appropriate to user needs.
➢ Trains and develops the library staff so that they continue to provide quality service.
➢ Uses the information gathered from user complaints and suggestions scheme and user surveys to help the library improve services.
➢ Publicizes the library range of services, library regulations and opening hours, and keeps users informed of any changes in the library.
➢ Meets and exceeds customers' expectations
➢ Provides the highest quality products, training and services to all customers
➢ Treats all users with respect and courtesy

## CUSTOMER CARE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES OF LIBRARIES:

**Dlamini (2002)** refers to the product as anything available in the library that can be offered by a library staff to satisfy a user customer need. Studies by **Mgobozi (2002)** point out that in relation to the library, a product is associated with information sources/resources offered by the library. The author further identifies the information products as follows:

## THE TRADITIONAL PRINTED JOURNALS
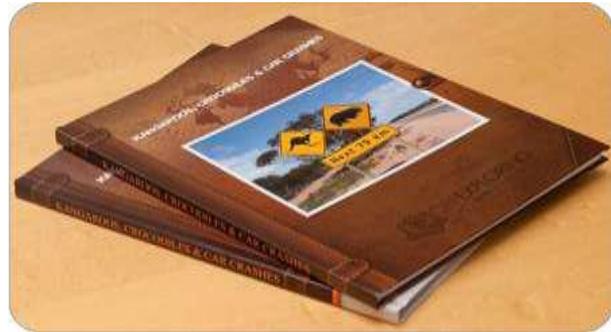


These journals are usually in a paper form and are placed on shelves in an information center or library. They are placed on shelves systematically and consulted for a particular reason, by learners and educators as well as researchers.

## THE ELECTRONIC JOURNALS:

According to **Klemperer (1999)** electronic journals are serial publications that are available in digital format. These electronic journals may be distributed in various ways such as CD-Rom and internet. Those delivered through internet are available through World Wide Web and E-mail. These journals are printed on paper and thereafter scanned, stored and distributed electronically to membership list, or only the table of contents and abstracts may be provided with specific information on how to obtain the full electronic text of an article. Rao (1998) states that these are digitized journals.

### CD-ROMS :

CD-ROMS tend to be electronic versions of the existing printed journals. Powerful searching tools are used with CD-ROMS (Hornby 2002).



### BOOKS:

According to **Hornby (2002)** a book is a printed work with pages bound along one side. They are kept in one place systematically, usually in libraries or bookshops.

## NEWSPAPERS:

Hornby (2002) defines a newspaper as a set of large printed sheets of paper containing news, articles, and advertisements and usually published every day or every week. They usually contain local, regional and national as well as international news.



## CASSETTES:



They are flat plastic case containing tape for playing or recording music/sound or information/photographic films that can be put into camera, radio or VCRs, Homby (2002). It is normally used by those people who want to listen to the music, stories, and watch films. In libraries cassettes are placed in the audiovisual section.

## MICROFILM:

They are usually kept in the audiovisual section, according to subjects. Microfilms are used for storing written information on in print of every size. It can only be read by a special machine Homby (2002).



## 6. METHODLOGY:

The Survey research method was adopted for this study. A survey is a systematic method of collecting data from a population of interest. It tends to be quantitative in nature and aims to collect information from a sample of the population such that the results are representative of the population within a certain degree of error. According to **Aron (2007)** the purpose of a survey is to collect quantitative information, usually through the use of a structured and standardized questionnaire. More so, **Mohammed (2005)** opined that a research design is said to be Survey if it has no control group. It involves gathering required data and information from the observation of the sample of the given population devoid of any manipulation of cause and effect relationship. Since it has no control group a Survey Research was deemed appropriate. The population of the study consists of all the registered Academics, Library staff and students of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Systematic Random Sampling technique was adopted for this study. A Sample of 100 Academic staff and 200 staff were randomly selected from those that frequent the Library while a sample of 10 professional librarians were purposively selected because they work in the Customer Services Division of the Library.

The researcher used questionnaire and interview for collecting data in this study. According to **Czaja and Blair (2005)** close ended questionnaire have the advantage of eliciting the desired responses and it minimizes the analysis time for the data collected.

## 7. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS AND DATA INTERPRETATION METHODS OF CONDUCTING CUSTOMER CARE:

All respondents were required to tick those methods of conducting customer care that they are familiar within the library. They were to choose between a "yes" or "no" in order to answer this item. Respondents from all tertiary institutions have indicated the following methods;

➢ Opinion polls (e.g. suggestion box) 59 (15%)
➢ Customer surveys (e.g. use of interviews and questionnaires) 26 (7%)
➢ Direct democracy (e.g. customers are free to say anything) 20 (5%)
➢ Joint customer/employee committee 12 (3%)

**Table: 1.Ways of notifying users of Services offered by Kashim Ibrahim Library**

| Options | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Notice Board | 98 | 68.5% |
| Library website | 35 | 24.5% |
| Mobile Phones/SMS | 0 | 0% |
| e-mail | 0 | 0% |
| Directly from Library staff | 10 | 7% |
| Total | 143 | 100% |

Table 4.2.6 shows ways of notifying users of the services offered by the library. 98(68.5%) of the respondents indicated that Notice boards are used in notifying users of services, 35(24.5%) indicated Library Website, no respondent indicated SMS or e-mails, while 10(7%) of the respondents indicated that library staff notify users of services. This means notice boards are mostly used to notify users of services, it then implies that if the user does not go to the library he/she would not know of the services offered in the Library.

**Table: 2. Purpose of use of the Library**

| Purpose | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Reading | 98 | 68.5% |
| Assignments | 20 | 14% |
| Projects and Theses | 12 | 8.4% |
| Recreation | 05 | 3.5% |
| Browse the Internet | 16 | 11.1% |

Table 2 shows the purpose of use of the library. Majority of the respondents indicated they use the library for reading 98(68.5%), 20(14%) indicated they use the library to do their assignments, 12(8.4%) indicated they use the library for Projects and Theses, 5(3.5%) indicated recreation while 16(11.1%) indicated they use the library for browsing the Internet.

**8.MAJOR FINDINGS:**

➢ The study observed that Kashim Ibrahim Library does not have proper customer care strategies in place. Those strategies, which are in place, are unknown among the library staff members and to the library users/customers.

➢ The study observes that familiarity of information products and services is triggered by the currency of information resources for user needs. It is noted that currency of information brings stability and use of information resources as it makes the library user-friendly to the library customers.

➢ The study observed that academic libraries have methods of conducting customer care in place even though they are unknown to library customers.

**9.CONCLUSION:**

This study has looked at customer care services and strategies in academic libraries in Kashim Ibrahim Library, Ahmadu Bello University, and Zaria. It looked also at how library users perceive customer care services and strategies in their libraries. It focused mainly on problem areas, such as customer care policy and structures of the library, methods of conducting customer care, information products and services offered by the library, satisfaction of users with information resources, and strategies of customer care used by academic libraries. These problem areas have resulted in the study drawing a conclusion based on the findings from the library staff and users as well as the literature review. It was evident from the literature review and findings that academic libraries have customers, which rely heavily in the use of information products and services offered. In addition it was found that Kashim Ibrahim Library has customer care policies, even though some academic libraries do not have it in place.

**10.RECOMMENDATION:**

1. It is recommended that those academic libraries that do not have customer care unit/person to put it in place. The unit/person would be responsible for customer services. This in turn would promote and tremendously improve the use of the library resources.

2. It is recommended that the library management increase its budget in order to afford buying what would stimulate the use of the library by its users. This in turn would benefit the library users in using the library resources and also raise the standard of service delivery to the level of academic libraries. The increase of the budget would help the library to conduct use studies to ensure that proper service delivery is achieved.

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I am Hassan Usman, a PhD Research scholar at career point University, Kota Rajasthan under the supervision of Dr. Deepak K. Shrivastava. I was born on 30th October1980. I am an indigene of Sabon Gari Local Government Kaduna State Nigeria. I attended Samaru L.E.A Primary School from 1986 to 1992 then proceeded to Government Secondary School from 1992 to 1998 respectively. I then proceeded to Ahmadu Bello University Zaria were I obtained my Diploma in Library and information Sciencefrom 2000 to 2002, I also had my Bachelor in Library and information Science from 2005 to 2009 and Masters in information Management from 2012 to 2014 all from the same University. I joined the services of the University in2010 as Library Officer and rose to the position of Librarian II. I was also appointed as the Faculty of Education Librarian from 2014 to date. I have attendedLocal and international conferences all in the field of Library and information Science. I am also married with two Children.