User studies of UNISWA Library: A case study of IDE Education Students

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Abstract. *User study requires a significant amount of time and effort. The understanding of users' behaviour can be gained through a particular user study. This paper will discuss the prerequisite of user studies in libraries in the current electronic environment where libraries are faced with new challenges brought by the digital revolution and rapidly developing new information technologies. It will also examine the importance of understanding user behavior and changing information needs and their satisfaction with the quality of the services libraries provide to meet the changing requirements. It indicates that the use of library resources and services is necessary to help students met their information requirements. The study finds that textbooks and journals are the most popular sources of information for the student's course work.*

Keywords: User Studies, Information Sources, E-resources, Information Need, UNISWA, UNISWA Library

1. Introduction

The Libraries provide relevant information resources for teaching, learning and research. The University of Swaziland (UNISWA) Library faces challenges in providing adequate resources and efficient services to its users because of the phenomenal growth in students over the past decade. The impact on library resources includes overuse of books and journals and the deterioration of the collection and the escalating cost of the journals. The University comprises of three campuses Mbabane, Luyengo and Kwaluseni each has its own library decentralized from Kwaluseni campus. To cater mainly for employed learners, the institution offers a limited number of programmes through distance education. It is the centre of academic and intellectual excellence. It has the responsibility of preserving and transmitting the nation's cultural heritage while at the same time contributing to the generation of new knowledge through research. The university provides programmes and courses that are relevant to the human resource needs of the country that are in line with regional and global trends. The university has embarked on a programme to ensure a smooth introduction on the use of library services and resources.

2. Vision and mission of the University

The vision of the University is Leadership through Excellence in Education.

The mission of the University of Swaziland is to achieve Excellence in teaching and learning, research and training, community service, provision of opportunities for consultancy, professional leadership and enterprise development in the contemporary context. The mission shall be achieved through:

- ➢ Providing education opportunities at undergraduate and postgraduate levels;
- ➢ Establishing new academic programmed designed to meet the emerging needs of society;
- ➢ Conducting a regular review of the academic programmes to make them demand-driven to stakeholders;
- ➢ Creating continuing education opportunities for the inculcation of lifelong learning;

- ➢ Generating, disseminating and preserving knowledge through research, stakeholders' participation and development of an institutional repository;
- ➢ Teaching that encourages participation of students in entrepreneurship endeavors;
- ➢ Accounting to stakeholders that fosters efficient utilization of resources;
- ➢ Coordinating and monitoring performance among all employees and periodic evaluation and review of activities; and
- ➢ Providing an excellent working and learning environment for staff and students.

3. Mission and objectives of the UNISWA Library

3.1 Mission

The Mission of UNISWA Library is to provide efficient service and access to quality academic information resources support the instructional, Learning, Research and Administrative functions of the University. In this regard, the library provides both print and electronic resources.

3.2 Objectives

- ➢ To computerize library operations and services to optimize information access through local, regional and internet connectivity.
- ➢ To develop library infrastructure in the three campuses in order to provide equitable services.
- ➢ To develop a responsive collection that is sufficiently comprehensive and representative of the universe of knowledge and ideas to keep pace with the changing needs of users.
- ➢ To select and acquire relevant and current documents, irrespective of format, to support the teaching learning and research needs of the users.
- ➢ To reduce the time lag between the ordering of resources and their accessibility.
- ➢ To create and maintain up-to date and user-friendly information retrieval tools to facilitate access to information sources.
- ➢ To develop and maintain efficient and effective services to meet user needs.
- ➢ To equip users with necessary skills which will enable them to fully exploit and utilize effectively the full range of information resources.
- ➢ To foster library research skills for lifelong independent learning.
- ➢ To collaborate and cooperate with other information centres in order to provide access to a wide range of information sources.
- ➢ To develop a responsive management system to ensure efficient and effective delivery of library and information services.
- ➢ To promote library staff development through education and training.
- ➢ To build and maintain a stable team of competent, motivated and dedicated library personnel.
- ➢ To install and maintain reliable library environment monitoring systems to promote document preservation.
- ➢ To contribute in the development of libraries in schools by equipping student teachers with the necessary skills for establishing school libraries.

4. User studies

User studies are one of the research areas in library and information science. They are large and varied because it is an area that combine some of the most used and least precisely define the concept of library and information science. User studies were first study in 1948 in the scientific Information conference of the Royal Society where Urquhart & Bernal reported their research findings. It ranges in complexity from the detailed research investigation which model how a user gathers information to the most elementary in house, descriptive studies of a single library. The benefits of user study are:

- ➢ Understanding the process of information transfer;
- ➢ Improvement of information transfer and communication;
- ➢ Modification of circulation services

➢ More information about print readability;
➢ Determination of the relationship between user and staff;
➢ More information regarding users work habits;
➢ Awareness of the possible application of user information to administration problems and decisions relating to budgeting, staffing etc.

5. Problem Statement

Most of the students come with different backgrounds some of which possess better skills to utilize library materials, while others have not enough skill in utilizing library materials such as computer, use of the internet, and library catalogues. The University of Swaziland Library conducts user orientation programs for students but still there are some students who face difficulties in accessing and using library materials. They take time to understand and use the library so the author embarks on this study, with the hope of finding their problems and find out the solution so that the materials in the library can be put into maximum utilization.

6. Purpose of the study

Library information resources are expensive. The librarians needed to manage these resources and make them accessible are also costly in terms of recruitment, and retention. To attain cost effectiveness in the university library services and promotes the use of library information resources, this study sought to establish ways of improving the information–seeking behaviour of the students. To attain that goal, the study stipulated the following objectives:

❖ To determine the frequency of library use of the IDE students;
❖ To establish the students' information needs;
❖ To find out the awareness and use of library resources by the students;
❖ To find out the type of information sources used by the students;
❖ To ascertain users opinion regarding the usefulness and adequacy of information sources and services;
❖ To know the purpose of seeking information;
❖ To establish the problems that the students encounter in information seeking;
❖ To determine the extent of use of library resources;
❖ To establish the level of satisfaction of needs; and
❖ To evaluate the services provided for the restructuring of information and/or the establishment of new services if necessary.

7. Methodology

User studies have a wide range of research approaches and methods. The study used a questionnaire-based survey method, which was less time-consuming. The population of the study consisted of 128 IDE B.Ed students. The survey comprises of 10 questions personal information such as gender, Department, Information sources used by the respondents, use of UNISWA library, adequacy of library collections, library use and computing skills of respondents, and the use of IT-based library sources and services in order to ensure reliability and effectiveness of the instrument. In order to save time and ensure better response rate, the questionnaires were personally distributed to students in their class 76 students (59.36%) filled-in-questionnaires were returned by the users. The collected data were analysed, classified and tabulated by employing statistical methods.

8. Analysis

The analysis is based on the questionnaire collected from the IDE education students that were taught Academic communication skill (Library skill) in their 1st year of the programme of University of Swaziland. The data collected from the students are analysed and tabulated as follows.

Table 2 shows the rate of response of the students. The sample for the survey was made for 128 students which comprises of students from B.Ed. Commerce, B.Ed. Secondary and B.Ed. Primary, but the questionnaire can be distributed to 109 students only. Out of the 109 (85.15%) questionnaire distributed the investigator got response from 76 students which is about 69.72% and 33 (29.35%) students did not give their response. The rate of response is highest in B.Ed. Secondary which rises to 72.72%. The percentage of questionnaire return and not return is based on the number of students the questionnaire has distributed (109).

Sl. No.	Students	B.Ed. Sec. Commerce	B.Ed. Secondary	B.Ed. Primary	Total
1.	Number of Students	14	39	75	128

Table 1. Number of students

Sl. No.	Questionnaire	B.Ed. Sec. Commerce	B.Ed. Secondary	B.Ed. Primary	Total	%
1.	Questionnaire distributed	9	33	67	109	85.15%
2.	Questionnaire return	6	24	46	76	69.72%
3.	Questionnaire not return	3	9	21	32	29.35%
4.	Response rate	66.66%	72.72%	68.65%	69.72%	69.72%

Table 2. Overall response

Sl. No.	Male	Female	Total
	30	46	76
	39.47%	60.52%	59.37%

Table 3. Gender study

Table 3 shows the gender of the respondent. Out of the 76 respondent it was found that 30 (39.47%) were male and 46 (60.52%) were female. The overall response rate is 59.37%.

Sl. No.	Yes		No		No response	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
2.	27	40	3	5	N/A	1
3.	90%	86.95%	10%	10.86	0%	2.17%

Table 4. Awareness of e-resources in the library

Table 4 shows the awareness of e-resources in the library. It is found that the male (90%) is more aware than the female (86.95%). Only 10% of the students are not aware of e-resources.

Sl. No.	Yes		No		No response		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1.	17	22	12	23	1	1	76
2.	56.66%	47.82%	40%	50%	3.33%	2.17%	69.72%

Table 5. Satisfaction with the service available in the library

Table 5 shows the satisfaction of the user with the services provided in the library. More than half (56.66%) of the male are satisfied with the services but (50%) of the female are not at all satisfied with the services provided by the library. Most of them complain mostly that the books are obsolete and there were not enough number of books for them to borrow.

Table 6 shows the frequency of visitors to the library. The frequency of students visit to the library has been classified into five time gaps as shown in table 6. The majority of users were visiting the library weekly followed by 2-3 times in a week. There are hardly students who visit the library on a daily basis since the students are part time only.

Sl.No.	Frequency	No. of respondent		No response		Total	%	
		Male	Female	Male	Female		Male	Female
1.	No response	N/A	N/A	1	N/A	1	3.33%	N/A
2.	Everyday	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	3.33%	N/A
3.	2-3 times	9	13	N/A	N/A	22	30%	28.26%
4.	Weekly	18	30	N/A	N/A	48	60%	62.21%
5.	Monthly	1	3	N/A	N/A	4	3.33%	6.52%

Table 6. Frequency of visit to the library

Sl. No.	Purpose	Respondent		%		Total	%
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Both	
1.	To study	23	41	76.66%	89.13%	64	84.21%
2.	To borrow books	25	41	83.33%	89.13%	66	86.84%
3.	Browsing the shelves	1	6	3.33%	13.04%	7	9.21%
4.	Used of reference materials	19	30	66.33%	62.21%	49	64.47%
5.	Read the journals	2	11	6.66%	23.91%	13	17.10%
6.	To collect course materials	11	19	36.66%	41.30%	30	39.47%
7.	Know the latest arrival	3	3	10%	6.52%	6	7.89%
8.	Read newspaper & magazines	6	10	20%	21.73%	16	21.05%
9.	Browse e-resources	12	23	40%	50%	35	46.05%

Table 7. Purpose of visit to the library

Sl. No.	Services	No. of respondent		%		Total	%
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Both	
1.	Issue / Return	21	31	70%	66.39%	52	68.42%
2.	Reference service	23	37	76.66%	80.43%	60	78.95%
3.	Books and journals	15	26	50%	56.52%	41	53.95%
4.	Seminar/ conference	N/A	2	N/A	4.35%	2	2.63%
5.	Indexing	N/A	7	N/A	15.22%	7	9.21%
6.	Abstracting	N/A	4	N/A	8.70%	4	5.26%
7.	Bibliography	21	25	70%	54.35%	46	60.53%
8.	Newspaper	12	13	40%	28.26%	25	32.89%
9.	Interlibrary loan	5	13	16.66%	28.26%	18	23.68%

Table 8.Use of library source and service

N.B. Multiple answers were permitted.

From the above table 7 it is seen that most users visited the library to study and to borrow books. Other than study and borrowing the books the users visit the library for using the reference material which is about 64.47%. Only a few users visit the library to know the latest arrival of the books and journals. Visiting library for browsing the electronic resources is not so encouraging at it stands for 46.05% only. Comparing gender wise for the purpose of visit female shows more in all except in used of reference materials and know the latest arrival.

Sl. No.	Purpose	No. of respondent		%		Total	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Both	
1.	For career development	9	17	30%	36.96%	28	36.84%
2.	To solve immediate practical problem	5	7	16.67%	15.22%	12	15.79%
3.	To keep up to date	9	14	30%	30.43%	23	30.26%
4.	To write an article /research paper	28	43	93.33%	93.48%	71	93.42%

Table 9. The purpose of seeking information

N.B. Multiple answers were permitted

Table 8 shows that the use of library sources and services. It was found that the majority of the students uses Reference service, followed by an Issue / return and then Bibliography. More than 50% of the students are also using the books and Journals. Seminar/Conference, Indexing and Abstracting are hardly used. From the table it shows that the service provided by the UNISWA library is not lacking far behind. One female has not responded about the source and services

N.B. Multiple answers were permitted

Table 9 indicates that the decreasing rank and order of information seeking. To write an article/research paper with 93.42% out of 76 respondents was the most preferred response for seeking information. This was followed by the reasons that include seeking for career development, keeping up-to date and to solve immediate practical problem. Out of the 76 responded only 1 male and 2 female has no response for the purpose of seeking information. So the majority of the students seek information for writing the assignment only.

Sl. No.	E-journals		Print		Both		No response	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1.	8	15	11	17	N/A	5	12	9
2.	26.66%	32.60%	36.66%	36.95%	N/A	10.86%	40%	19.56%

Table 10. Preference of E-journals and Print Journals

Table 10 shows the respondent preference on the use of E-Journals or the print journals. From the table it is seen that they prefer the Print journals more than the E-Journals. More than 40% of the male has not responded their preference. This is the reason the use of E-resources is not encouraging among the distance education learners.

Sl. No.	Yes		No		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	No problem
1.	7	17	23	29	52
2.	23.33%	36.95%	76.66%	63.04%	68.42%

Table 11. Problem on use of e-resources

From the above table it is found that more than half the student's 76.66% male and 63.04% female do not have a problem in using the electronic resources but still the e-resources usage is not that encouraging since they are distance learners and the e-resources subscribed by the library is IP authenticated so they can't use beyond the library and they have no time to spend much in the library. It is of the opinion that the usage will be more if they are allowed to access at their own pace with the user ID as stipulated by the university.

Sl. No.	Yes		No	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1.	29	42	1	4
2.	96.66%	91.30%	3.33%	8.69%

Table 12. Does the ACS (Academic and Communication) class help you?

Most students were of the opinion that the class (ACS) Academic Communication Skill which was done by the Library professional to teach library skill of the first entrant of the university are of phenomenal use. They were of the view that for more effective and efficient use of the library, students need instruction on how to use information sources in their subject areas.

9. Recommendation

University library faces a number of challenges in its user instruction of Library skills but still it is through user education the librarian is able to take the challenges. The library user instruction program should be to empower

students with the benefit of using information resources in all formats, and be proficient in library use. They should integrate physical expansion of collections and buildings as well as propose a well–planned user instruction and information skills program.

It should lobby for funds to increase the print collections; electronic collections and expand on the access points, increase the number of librarians serving the ever growing population of students in the University. All these should be done while addressing the information demand so that the resources are appropriately utilized.
For publicity of the libraries resources and services, the following could be done:

> Use of attractive posters in each section of the library describing the services and scope of the collections;
> Issue out pamphlets about the library services and workshops;
> The user instruction workshops should be marketed using flyers and pamphlets, promoting the collections, services and library regulations in general and provide current editions of video coverage that includes new developments in the library to be used to introduce fresh students to the library and its services;
> Be creative in producing posters and postcards depicting library topics. This could turn out to be a money–generating venture;
> Library personnel should publish articles, news releases and short communications for the university news publications to increase on the sensitisation mechanisms or use the library Web page for publicity;
> Students should also properly be initiated and guided into being good information resource users so that they do not depend mainly on lecture notes to accomplish their knowledge goals;
> Reading and research should be the dominating activity of which information literacy is the foundation; and,
> Lecturers should take the lead in initiating library use of their students, with the librarians left to ensure that the students are appropriately informed and guided.

10. Conclusions

Understanding the actual needs of information users and taking steps to satisfy them is the first step towards effective service provision. This can best be achieved through formal in–depth studies. Librarians, especially those involved in bibliographic instruction should be interested in ways individuals approach the library and the methods they use to search for needed information. Librarians could redesign strategies intended to improve the provision of library services especially towards information skills development and information resource awareness.

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