An assessment of user satisfaction on library services: a case study of undergraduate Biology students at the University of Jaffna

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Abstract

The paper discusses the results of the user satisfaction survey conducted in the Jaffna University library among the undergraduates of general degree bioscience students in August 2010. The objectives of the study were to assess the library user satisfaction regarding the currently available information sources and services and to identify the unmet needs of the undergraduates for the future developments in the library. Self administered questionnaire survey was conducted among these undergraduates. The study revealed that the library retains as essential component to facilitate the general degree bioscience undergraduates' learning and research activities. The study clearly enumerated that the efficiency of some of the presently available services such as photocopying services, interlibrary loan services, selective dissemination of information and current awareness service were not met the undergraduates' expectations. . The findings of the survey leave plenty of scope for improvement in library activities.

Keywords: User satisfaction, User needs, Academic libraries, User surveys

Introduction

Key to the success of any academic program is the quality of its library system. The main function of a University Library is to provide information on learning, teaching and research. Information is regarded as the lifeblood of Universities where learning is also at its heart. Academic libraries are currently facing their greatest challenge due to the global digital revolution. Users can access the libraries' resources without stepping into the library building. They can also very easily access other libraries' resources such as online catalogs and unrestricted databases. The internet has opened the resources of libraries to

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students and faculty worldwide. Libraries begin seriously to assess how well they are anticipating, meeting and delighting the user community. The primary focus should be on understanding customers' needs. To be successful in the future, customers' perspectives are integrated into planning.

Academic Library users have varying needs and expectations. It is the responsibility of the library staff to know the needs and expectations. User satisfaction generally evaluates the sources and services of the library as a whole. It helps to clarify the librarians' concept of the service as well as the assumption about the user needs. One of the elements of quality service is when users' personal needs and expectations are incorporated into the development of programs and services of libraries (Millson-Martula,C., and Menon V, 1995). Effectiveness must be measured in terms of how well a service satisfies the demand placed upon it by the users (Lancaster, 1993).

The university community is not a static environment. User needs are never static. The usefulness of library services must be critically assessed on regular basis. "The primary consideration of a library seeking to serve its patrons is its ability to seek out both users and nonusers in a continuing attempt to systematically discern their library needs and information requirements, earnestly attend to them, and then anticipate future ones. If use is low, it is the library's responsibility to find out why and to seek solution" (Haro, 1971). Library user surveys have become widespread in Academic Libraries. When properly designed and administered user surveys can provide both quantitative and qualitative data directly from the target population.

Jaffna University Library was established in 1974.The Main Library of the university is housed in a spacious building at a central spot in the Thirunelvelly campus. There are branch libraries in the Faculty of medicine, Department of Siddha Medicine, Faculty of Agriculture and Ramanathan academy of Fine Arts. The Main Library consists of information sources mainly for the Faculties of Science, Arts &Humanities, Management and Law. One of the programs offered by the Faculty of Science, University of Jaffna is the

three years bioscience general degree. No library user surveys have been recently conducted among the Undergraduates Biology students in the University of Jaffna.

By considering the importance of assessment of user satisfaction, it has been decided to carry out a user survey among the undergraduates of biology students at the University of Jaffna Library. User surveys have often been used as a tool to assess services and user satisfaction. These measures should help to maximize the efficient and effective use of the Library.

Objectives

1) To assess the use of current information sources and services available in the Jaffna University Library by the Undergraduates of Bio Science students.

2) To determine how satisfied Undergraduates of Bio Science students are with the current library resources and services.

3) To identify the unmet needs of the Undergraduates for the future improvements.

Methodology

The survey research method was applied for this assessment. A library user survey was conducted among the general degree Biology Undergraduate students of Faculty of Science, University of Jaffna. The study population consisted of entire Undergraduate students of general degree Bio Science stream. Population is 120. Simple random sampling was done to select the students from each batch. There were three batches of students such as first year (37 students), second year (43 students) and third year (40 students). Sample was drawn from all three batches in equal number as twenty five from one batch. Total sample size was seventy five. Self administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the sample. Questionnaire consisted of more structured and a few open ended questions. Questionnaire was pretested in a random sample of a user group to check for its clarity. Based on the pilot survey results, the questionnaire was redesigned to better address the objectives of the assessment. The questionnaire basically included questions regarding general information about the users, frequency of visit to the library, reasons for the visit, users' satisfaction on the information sources and

services, perceptions about the library staff, overall satisfaction about the library environment and the unmet needs they expected in the library. Adequate space was given to include their comments in each section. The questionnaires were distributed and collected in lecture halls. The collected data were analyzed and findings are presented below.

Results and Discussion

A total of sixty three completed questionnaires were received out of seventy five giving an overall response rate of 84%. The survey results showed that 33% of the respondents are male students whereas 67 % of them are female students. Seventy seven percent (77%) of the respondents are in the age group of between 22-25 years.

Library usage

The results of the study revealed that, 98 % of the survey respondents mentioned that they use the library for learning and research purposes. Majority of the Undergraduates participated in the survey felt that the library is an essential component to facilitate learning and research activities. They also perceived that library plays an important role in improving their academic capabilities.

Frequency of visit to the Library

Table 1: Frequency of visit to the library

Frequency	1st year	2nd year	3rd year	Total %
Daily	2	1	1	(4) 6%
2-3 times a week	17	17	16	(50) 80%
2-3 times a month	-	2	2	(4) 6%
Seldom	-	2	3	(5) 8%

Table 1 shows that majority of the respondents (86%) visit the library daily or 2-3 times a week. Only 6% of them seldom use the library. The study revealed that library is heavily used by the Undergraduate Biology students of Jaffna University.

Purpose of visit

Further the respondents were asked about the purpose of visit to the library. Purpose of visit gives essential information about the reading materials, which are required for the library users. Sixty four percent (64%) of the respondents visited the library for more than two purposes, which is a good sign about the library usage. Majority of the students (71%) gave highest emphasizes for borrowing books. It was followed by the purpose of completing assignments & tutorials. Reference work was the next favored purpose. In addition some respondents (7%) stated that it is a quite place to study. Only third year students stated that they visit the library for literature searching. Forty eight percent (48%) of the third year students stated the purpose of visit to the library was literature searching. This is due to the fact that biological science general degree has a research component only in the third year.

User satisfaction level with the collection

Table 2: Overall user satisfaction level with the collection

Response	*Number of respondents*	Percentage
Yes	40	64%
No	23	36%

Participants of the study were asked whether they are satisfied with the overall collection in the Library. Sixty four percent (64%) of them responded that they were satisfied with the collection. Table 2 shows majority of the respondents were satisfied with the collection in the Library.
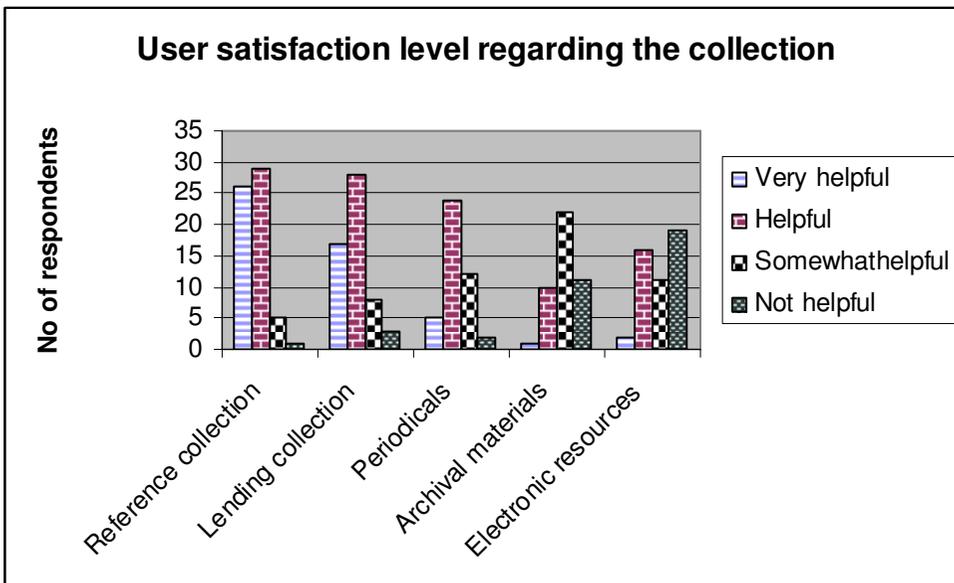
Figure 1: User satisfaction level regarding the collection.

Of the total respondents 91% responded the reference collection in the Library was either very helpful or helpful 80% found the lending collection either very helpful or helpful. It clearly revealed that the respondents were satisfied with the reference and lending collection. In this study somewhat helpful and not helpful were considered as not helpful and very helpful and helpful were considered as helpful.

Sixty three percent (63%) respondents expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the electronic collection either somewhat helpful or not helpful. It clearly revealed that quite a large amount of respondents were not satisfied with the electronic collection in the Library. The Library needs to find developments to meet the user expectations regarding the electronic collection (see table 3).

Table 3: User satisfaction level regarding the collection

Types of collection	Very helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful
Reference collection	43%	48%	8%	1%
Lending collection	30%	50%	14%	6%
Periodicals	12%	56%	28%	5%
Archival materials	2%	36%	31%	41%
Electronic resources	4%	33%	23%	40%

According to the table 4, regarding the collection, respondents of the study pointed out that reference and lending collection are helpful, they pointed out reading materials for undergraduates are insufficient. Sixty two percent (62%) of them responded that they were unable to get the latest editions of textbooks and 81% of them responded insufficient number of copies of textbooks.

Table 4: User satisfaction regarding the textbooks.

Reasons	Yes	No
Able to get latest edition of textbooks.	23 (38%)	39 (62%)
Sufficient number of copies of textbooks	12 (19%)	51 (81%)

The respondents responded that the most important Library materials needed by them were the textbooks. A study conducted at University of Brunei in which concluded that textbooks and reference books were the most important for the Undergraduates while textbooks and online journals were the most important for academic staff (Perera, 2007). Findings of the survey clearly indicated that the Undergraduates participated in the study strongly felt the collection should be improved by incorporating new and latest editions of books and multiple copies of textbooks.

Undergraduates' perception about the library staff

Librarians are aware of the fact that they cannot satisfy the user needs just by having a well stocked Library. They also have to depend on library staff to assist users to find what they need. ThereforeLibrary staff members are expected to be helpful and approachable.

Table 5: Attitude of Library staff members to help the library users

Different attitudes of library staff	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Dissatisfied
Approachability/friendliness of staff	(32%)	(56%)	(12%)	(0%)
Availability of staff when assistance is needed	(15%)	(73%)	(7%)	(5%)
Helpfulness in locating information	(23%)	(57%)	(20%)	(0%)
Knowledge regarding the resources.	(18%)	(67%)	(14%)	(2%)

It is very pleasing to see the results of the study (Table 5) indicated that the users are satisfied with the Library staff members' attitude towards the helpfulness in locating information. However some of the users felt somewhat satisfied or dissatisfied regarding the perception about the Library staff. To maintain a high level of user satisfaction amongst the users, the Library should provide continuous training programmes to its members of staff.

Library services

Knowing the existence of a service is the first step in the usage of the offer. Respondents were asked about their awareness about the Library services. Only 61% responded they were aware of the services available in the Library. It is noteworthy to understand that about 74% of the first year students were unaware of the services. The study revealed that awareness programs offered to undergraduates are inadequate. Lack of awareness was the primary reason that the Undergraduate Biology students did not use the library's electronic databases in University College Dublin (Callinan, 2005). Libraries, which offer the services, should make a greater effort to publicize its availability as it is underused

due to unawareness.

Table 6: Awareness about the services

Year	Yes	No
1st year	26.31%	73.68%
2nd year	90.5%	9.5%
3rd year	67%	33%
Total	61.27%	38.73%

Response rate for not helpful was more than 40% in printing facilities, audio visual facilities. Almost sixty seven percent (66.7%) of the respondents indicated the Inter Library Loan service was somewhat helpful or not helpful. The respondents expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the services such as current awareness services, selective dissemination of information and online public access catalog facilities. These services could be improved with the electronic transfer of documents. Table 7 clearly indicated many respondents were not using these services such as online public access catalogue, selective dissemination of information and current awareness services. Emphasis on instruction and knowledge on how to use these resources can help to increase the Library usage and also to enable them to evaluate more effectively the resources they find when they do research (Simmonds and Analeeeb, 2001).

Table 7: Satisfaction with the library services

Library services	Very helpful	Helpful	Somewhat helpful	Not helpful
Check in & checkout of library materials	34.4%	59%	6.6%	0%
Number of books allowed for borrowing	8.5%	59.3%	23.7%	8.5%
Current awareness services	8.3%	55%	25%	11.7%

Selective dissemination of information	15.4%	38.5%	23.1%	23%
Inter Library Loan	10.4%	22.9%	27.1%	39.6%
Library orientation programme	22%	44.1%	27.1%	6.8%
Online public catalogue facility	14.3%	26.8%	35.7%	23.2%
Library guides, handouts.	12.7%	40%	23.6%	23.6%
Photocopying facilities	6.7%	28.3%	40%	25%
Printing facilities	1.7%	18.9%	31%	48.4%
Audio visual facilities	3.6%	10.9%	25.5%	60%

In a survey conducted to assess undergraduate user needs in University of Lova. In this study the respondents expressed frustration at not being able to locate needed Library materials. The frustration appeared to have a number of causes due to the physical arrangement of Library, mutilated or mis-shelved materials; and the library not owning materials listed in computerized indexes (Clougherty, Leo..,etal,1998). Regarding the circulation of Library materials, respondents responded some of the important books are borrowed by staff on long term and when students borrow these books they keep the books with them by continuous renewals. Majority of the participants of the study insisted on the improvement of photocopying facilities with nominal charges.

Library environment

Majority of the participants were satisfied with the available reading tables and chairs, cleanliness of the Library, lighting, physical place as a library etc (Table-8). In addition 37% of the participants suggested to extent the opening hours of the Library. Twenty three percent of the respondents (23 %) expressed their dissatisfaction regarding the ventilation of the library. They requested for a separate study room with air conditioning in order to avoid problems such as noise, heat and ventilation.

Table 8: Satisfaction with the physical environment of the library (%).

Facilities	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Dissatisfied
Reading tables and chairs	56.7%	36.7%	6.6%	0%
Study area	57%	37%	6%	0%
Shelf arrangement	33%	52%	10%	5%
Ventilation	20%	23%	34%	23%
Lighting	33%	41%	22%	4%
Quietness	20%	53%	13%	14%
Cleanliness	20%	57%	13%	10%
Opening hours	33%	30%	23%	14%

The contribution of the Library in enhancing the Undergraduate students' subject knowledge, reading abilities, research skills and personal capabilities were very much appreciated by the participants.

Conclusion

The results of the survey identified where the Library can concentrate their efforts for Undergraduates of Biology students of University of Jaffna. It has been concluded that the Library retains an essential component to facilitate the Undergraduates' learning and research activities. Text books were the main information source among the Undergraduates. Though the Undergraduate students were overall satisfied with the collection they pointed out the reading materials were insufficient. It is strongly recommended that the book collection should be improved by incorporating new and latest edition of books. The study revealed that existing electronic resources in the Library was also inadequate. Hence, steps should be taken to acquire electronic information sources. The study proved that the necessity to improve some library services such as Inter Library Loan service, photocopying service, selective dissemination of information

and current awareness service. The creativity, as well as additional monies and Undergraduate input, will improve the University of Jaffna Libraries' Undergraduate services and sources.

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