

## **Faculty Opinion as Collection Evaluation Method: a Case Study of Redeemer's University Library**

Osagie Oseghale  
Redeemer's University  
Library

Redemption City, Mowe, Ogun State, Nigeria

### **Introduction**

Developing a balanced and usable collection is an important aspect of library services. Academic library collections are built to meet specific research and information needs of the institution's academic programmes. The curriculum is the frame upon which the library collection is built. All programmes must be covered to facilitate effective teaching, learning, research, and community services. Collection analysis and evaluation are crucial to ensuring efficient, effective, and usable collections. Collection effectiveness is measured, according to Lumande and Ojedokun (2005), by the extent to which a library collection can facilitate research activities and how much students can rely on it for project and assignments. Pausch and Popp (1997) maintain that accountability, outcomes measurement, and assessment are the subject of discussions in higher education, and coupled with the fact that libraries collections consume large proportion of the budget, libraries must ensure that what is collected matches or meets the expressed needs and information expectation of the university communities. One of way of ensuring that such needs are met is through collection evaluation within the framework of the curriculum. Crowder (1997) defines curriculum as the courses or programmes of study offered by an educational institution. It includes all activities that students must complete to finish a programme of study and achieve learning goals. The curriculum is not a fixed product but a dynamic process that responds to changes both in the society and in the educational institution, the library should be positioned to effectively respond to curriculum changes.

Another reason for collection evaluation is accreditation by bodies such as the Nigerian Universities Commission (NUC), Nigerian Legal Council, Nigerian Medical and Dental Association, and others. This imposes more responsibilities on the library, which has to ensure that the collection reflects the requirements for accreditation. Wright (2005) views accreditation as the vehicle to monitor the quality of education.

### **Collection Evaluation Methods**

Pastine (1996) identifies a number of methodologies in literature which have received some acceptance and use in academic and research libraries. Some methods rely on collecting qualitative or quantitative statistics (Credaro, 2001). Quantitative statistics involves variables such as the current number of items in the collection, number of items added or rate of growth and items available per student in comparisons to recommended lists or to similar library collections and the study of the age of the collection. Qualitative approaches include analysis of circulation and InterLibrary Lending (ILL) statistics and in-house use studies of materials. A user satisfaction survey which employs a questionnaire or survey is another technique. This method is sometimes followed up with telephone interviews (Silveria, 1996). Studies of the citations and bibliographies of customers' publications to find out if items cited are

available in the collections is another method of collection evaluation and assessment of customer satisfaction (Pastine, 1996). Credaro (2001) has identified three ways of evaluating a library collection: survey of user opinion, which is user centered (through questionnaire or interview); the conspectus approach which involves the use of subject descriptors; and the cumulative approach, which combines some of the first two methods of collection assessment. Credaro concludes that "the success of any method of assessment depends on how well it meets the goals of the evaluation." In evaluating multimedia resources, Lamb (2004) agrees that collection evaluation can centre on either the collection or the customer. He identifies three methods: collection mapping, circulation statistics and patron survey.

There are many benefits derivable from collection evaluation. Lamb (2004) submits that "collection evaluation helps librarians to review the strength and weaknesses of the entire collection through graphic representation" and that the "idea is to look at the quality, quantity and condition of the collection." According to Franklin, Essex, and Hamilton (1999), collection evaluation can be used in budgeting, by comparing the collection in a given subject area against the curriculum in that area. Supporting this view, Daigneault (2004) states, "I divide the budget by priorities and set aside certain amounts for each area of the curriculum. I don't try for balance; instead I try to fill curriculum needs". He asserts that when the collection is pertinent to the curriculum, it will be used. As Pastine (1996) observes, "an academic library's reputation is no longer primarily based on quantity and number of volumes held but on quality of the collections along with access capabilities."

An academic library is both intermediary and adjudicator of collection purchases. Faculty involvement in library resources decisions is not only common place, but essential in making decisions (Atkinson, 1993). Faculty opinion of a library collection is the aggregate of the individual views, attitudes, and beliefs about the extent to which the library has met the demands of the curriculum. The development of an academic library collection is a cooperative effort between librarians and teaching faculty. Olanlokun (2005) notes that a deficient collection can have an adverse effect on the institution. Faculty opinion as a process of evaluating collection development will assist in identifying areas of strength and weakness in the collection so that gaps and inadequacies can be filled.

### **Redeemer's University (RUN) Library**

The Redeemer's University (RUN) Nigeria, started full academic activities in September 2005, with five hundred students at its temporary site. The university started with three colleges – Humanities, Management and Natural Sciences, and opened its library to users in September 2005 with a collection of 6,000 volumes. The collection, a magnificent gift from the Ondo State indigenes in the US, consisted largely of recently published materials which were particularly strong in the management sciences. The donation was not limited to printed books; it contained a sizeable collection of non-book materials such as CDs, Videos, and illustrated transparencies. There were also runs of back issues of journals and other serial titles. This initial collection has been added to through purchase, generous donations of hard-to-find publications, and reference materials.

In line with the vision of the university to build a high technology-based institution and a paperless community, the library has sought to complement the book resources with e-resources, particularly e-journals, full-text databases, and access to remote libraries. Material collections in the library include resources such as major dictionaries, encyclopedias, historical surveys, monographs, textbooks, fiction, pamphlets, archival materials, audio and video materials, bibliographies, biographies, and periodicals in various formats, including print and electronic. Other resources include a collection of Christian books authored by well-known evangelists and Christian leaders, and a collection of books written about Nigeria and Africa (Nigeriana and Africana). Beyond the scope and content of the collection, other factors such as cost, relevance, usability, and currency also determine acquisition priorities. Today, the Redeemer's University library holds more than twelve thousand volumes.

One of the ways to ensure the effectiveness of a collection is through periodic evaluation. This study is aimed at evaluating the collection of Redeemer's University Library using teachers' opinions. The objectives of the study are

- to examine how often users find relevant and current information in the collection
- to determine the extent to which the Library collection is reflective of the curricular objectives of the University
- to examine the effectiveness of the collection
- to identify areas of weakness and strength in the collection
- to determine the qualitative level of collection support for a specific academic program.

This study will be significant in developing a participatory system of library collection evaluation. It will also be useful in mapping a modality for developing a balanced collection in a most cost effective way that will reflect the curricular objectives, culture, and vision of private universities in Nigeria.

## **Methodology**

Eighty-two faculty members, spread across the colleges of Humanities, Management, and Natural Sciences, were the total number of academic staff available for this study. Despite the fact that all members of the university community use the library, this study is targeted at academic staff (lecturers) because they are well informed of the curricular expectations and framework of the university. Lecturers are in the best position to know whether the collection is at odds with the curriculum. The data collection instrument used for this study is a user-centered questionnaire. The questionnaire is structured to clearly identify important variables associated with academic staff opinion of the existing collection in relation to the curriculum in teaching areas. A total of 82 copies of questionnaire were distributed. 74 were retrieved and after data sorting 70, representing 85.4 percent, were found valid for analysis.

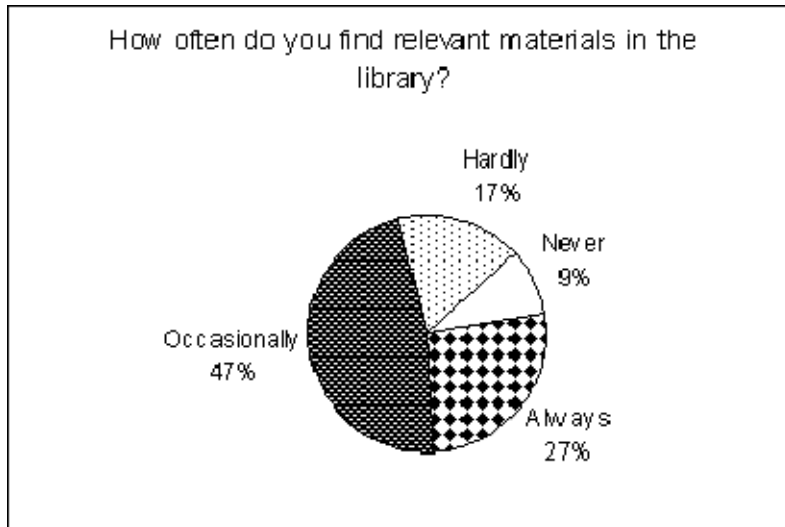
## **Results**

The findings are reported in seven main areas: the purpose for using the library, how often users find relevant materials in the library, currency of the information materials they find, opinion of the extent to which the collection is reflective of the curriculum, the effectiveness of the collection based on the levels of study in the university, and the strength of the collection in the various sections of the library, as well as opinions on the sections of the library that should be enhanced and the subject areas that should be improved upon in the next phase (6 -10 years) of academic development.

## **Purpose for using RUN Library**

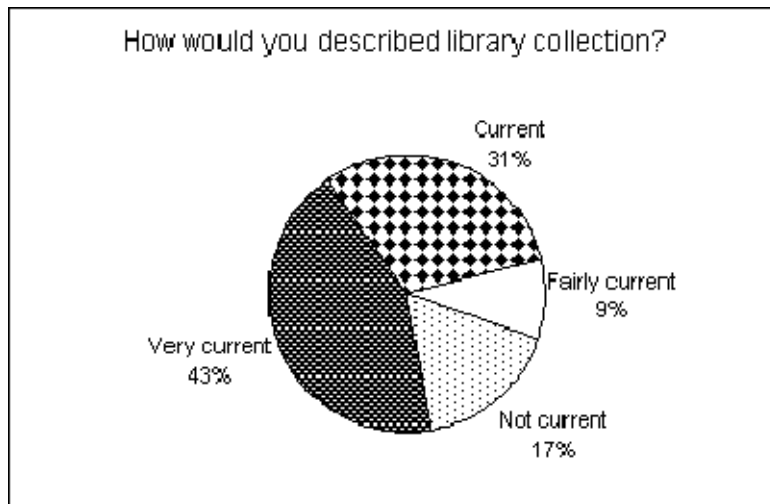
A majority of respondents use Redeemer's University (RUN) library collection to support teaching and independent study. The majority of the academic staff to whom this study is targeted at are PhD students in other universities in Nigeria, and, as such, would find academic library useful for teaching, studying and independent research.

Chart 1 below shows how often respondents find relevant information materials in the library.



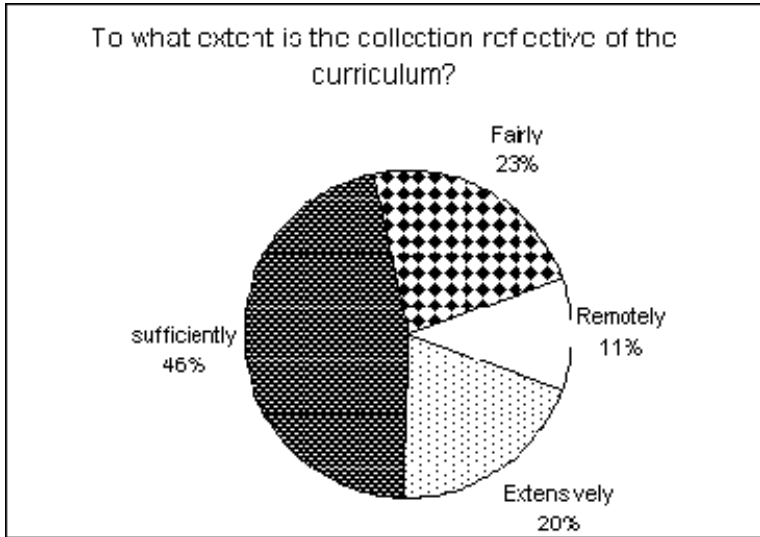
The quality of a collection reflects the image of a library. In evaluating a library collection, it is important to find out how often respondents find relevant materials in the collection. This study shows that a majority of respondents occasionally find relevant information materials in their areas of interest.

Chart 2 reveals respondents' opinion on the currency of information materials they find in RUN library.



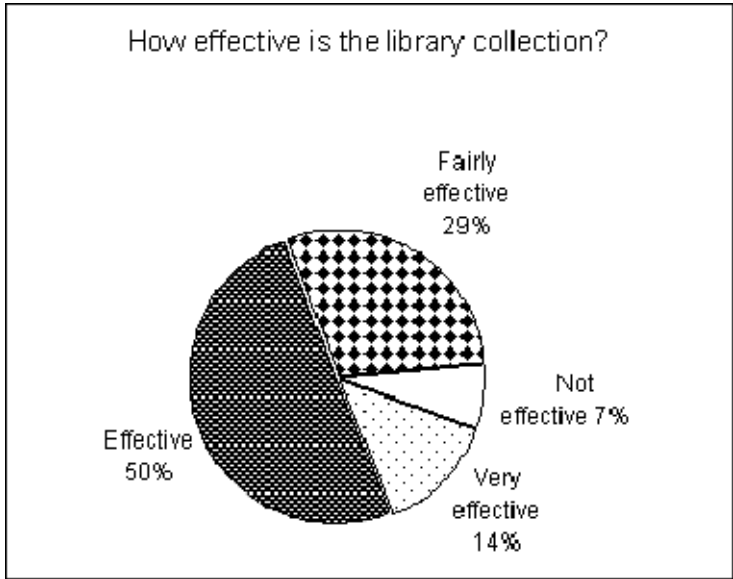
An overwhelming majority of the respondents described RUN library collection as very current.

Chart 3 below shows respondents' opinions on the extent to which the collection is reflective of the curriculum of their teaching courses at RUN.



Results from chart 3 indicate that the collection is sufficiently reflective of the curriculum of respondents' teaching courses. .

Chart 4 below reveals respondents' opinions of the effectiveness of the library collection



Results from the chart above revealed that majority of respondents, hold the opinion that RUN library collection is effective in meeting their information needs.

The table below shows respondents' opinions of the strength of RUN library collection

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Subject library collection	31%	50%	13%	6%
Serials collection	3%	20%	27%	50%
Reference collection	36%	44%	9%	11%
Virtual Library	6%	43%	33%	18%
Total	19%	40%	20%	21%

The table indicates that the collection is good and excellent in subject, reference, and virtual library, but poor in serials collection.

### **Subject Areas Needing Improvement**

A majority of respondents commented that their subject areas could be improved upon, and that the library should acquire more Nigerian local publications, since more than 90 percent of the collection is foreign publications. The dominant reasons advanced include: Nigerian books are easier to understand, and studies in the university have not reached such an advanced level where students would appreciate highly advanced foreign text books. Another major reason is that these advanced foreign books project a foreign environment.

### **Discussion**

A majority of respondents occasionally find relevant information materials in the collection. The material they find is current and sufficiently reflective of the curriculum. Based on the levels of studies at the university, the collection is effective and strong in subject (reader's service section), reference, and electronic resources, but poor in print serials. The results indicate a need to intensify user education and information literacy programmes, to help users become familiar with the collection. Even though the library subscribes to electronic journals, the study shows that the print serials collection is very important and should be improved.

### **Conclusion**

Universities are mandated to extend the frontiers of knowledge through research, dissemination of knowledge, teaching, and public service. The university library has an important role to play in these mandates. The library is a gateway to information resources, and can enhance learning, teaching and research in a prompt, cost-effective, and painless manner. This can be achieved if the library collection is not at variance with the curriculum. One of the ways to ensure that the collection is in harmony with the curriculum is to seek the views of faculty about the collection, through regular assessment of faculty opinion about library collections and services. Much talk about collection development, especially in developing countries, focuses on input rather than output, which is why libraries have achieved little even with so much input. Libraries are more committed to meticulous observance of the rules than appreciation of their services by the people served. Usable library collections are known by the outcomes. Moreover, studies have shown that collection efficiency and effectiveness depend on the extent to which it can facilitate research, and by how much students can rely on it for projects and assignments. Osborne (1999) defines efficiency and effectiveness as bringing greater output per unit input, ensuring quality services, and meeting user needs well. Effectiveness requires responsiveness to clients, for which collection and staff should be committed and motivated.

The importance of collection and curriculum evaluation is to ensure that users' needs are met. This study sought the opinions of the target users of RUN Library. It has shown that the opinions of

academic staff are needed in identifying and meeting their expectations. Collection development librarians in Nigerian universities should consider, in consultation with academic colleagues, what the library can and should provide, and how this balance will relate to teaching, learning, and research needs of users. Efforts should be made to involve library users, especially academic staff, in collection analysis and evaluation.

Library users judge a collection by the extent to which it can meet their teaching, learning, and research requirements. This judgment might be more critical in an environment where they have no means of expressing their opinions. A high rate of failure to find relevant information in the collection should be an indication of the mismatch in the process of satisfying curricular objectives. This mismatch can be identified by seeking the opinions of users. If Nigerian academic libraries are to be seen as relevant to their communities, they must ensure that their collections are not at variance with the curriculum. One of the ways to accomplish this is to seek the opinions of academic staff users in developing and evaluating the collections.

## References

- Credaro, A. (2001). Collection evaluation in school libraries. Available: [http://www.geocities.com/Anthens/Stux\\_7534/ University/tlship/collEval.html](http://www.geocities.com/Anthens/Stux_7534/University/tlship/collEval.html).
- Crowder, L.V. (1997). A participatory approach to curriculum development. Available: [http://www.fao.org/sd/exandirect/exan\\_0017.html](http://www.fao.org/sd/exandirect/exan_0017.html)
- Daigneault, A.I. (2004). The collection and the curriculum go hand in hand. Available: <http://www.sagebrushcorp.com/support/handinhand.cfm>.
- Jenkins, C., & Morley, M. (1999). *Collection management in academic libraries*. 2nd ed. Aldershot, England: Gower. 302 p.
- Lamb, A., & Johnson, L. (2004). Multimedia seeds: Exploring audio and video collection management. Available: <http://eduscapes.com/seeds/cd4.html#/>
- Lumande, E., & Ojedoku, A.A. (2005). Collection mapping as an evaluation technique for determining curriculum and collection relationship: the University of Botswana experience. *Africa Journal of Library, Archives and Information Sciences* 15 (1) 25-34.
- Nwalo, K.I.N. (2003). *Fundamentals of library practice: A manual on library routines*. Ibadan : Stirling-Horden Publishers.
- Ochai, A. (2001). Collection development in Nigerian Libraries: Problems and prospects in libraries and librarianship in Nigeria. In Olanlokun, S.O., & Salisu, T.M. (Eds.) Lagos: Ikofa Press, p.61.
- Olanlokun, S.O., & Adekanye, E.A. (2005). collection development in an unstable economy: A case study of the University of Lagos Library. *African Journal of Library Archives and Information Science* 15 (2): 141-148.
- Osborne, D. (2001). Re-educating managers: From training for competence to training for commitment. *International Review of Administrative Science* 67 :635-647.
- Pastine, M. (1996). Collection development past and future. *Collection Development* 21 (2,3,4): 1-30.

Paush, L.M., & Popp, M.P. (1997). Assessment of information literacy: Lessons from the higher education assessment movement. Presented during the 1997 ACRL National conference in Nashville. Available: [http://www.ala.org/ala/acrlbucket/nashville1997pap/paush\\_popp.html](http://www.ala.org/ala/acrlbucket/nashville1997pap/paush_popp.html)

Silveria, J.B. (1996). The balancing act: Collection development in support of remote users in an extended campus setting. *Collection Management* 21 (3, 4): 139-151.