

A SWOT Analysis of the University Library of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Library, Umudike, Nigeria

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Introduction

Universities are important agents for national development, producing human resources needed for social, economic, and political progress. Universities render essential community service and serve as centers for moral, social and intellectual rejuvenation (Oyediran, 1993). Universities produce knowledge for problem-solving, economic activity, guidance and direction, and the ability to escape ignorance and superstition and protect and advance the common good. University libraries have an important role in the teaching, research, and service that universities undertake. A university library is both a collegiate library that supports teaching, and a research library (Rogers and Weber, 1971). This paper examines the infrastructure, administration, staff, collections, and technical and reader's services of the Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Library in terms of their support for the university's teaching and research missions, highlighting strengths, weakness, threats and opportunities (SWOT).

Michael Okpara University of Agriculture

The University, which began with six Colleges and a School of General Studies in the 1993/94 academic year (Annual Report) is located at Umudike, Ikwuano Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria. It is located near institutions as Government College Umudike, Abia State University, Umudike Campus, and the National Root Crop Research Institute (NRCRI) Umudike. On May 27, 1994, one year from the date of appointment of key officers and the Governing Council, the University opened its doors to its first set of students. Its first matriculation took place in August 1994. In addition to many undergraduate programmes, the university set up a postgraduate school in January 1997.

In addition to the traditional tripartite mission of universities – teaching, research, and community service, the University of Agriculture Umudike has adopted “training” as a fourth mission, to ensure that its products can go from “Lab to Land.” The University commits it self to the production of educated farmers, the conduct of multi-disciplinary and relevant organized research, and the systematic propagation of new and improved agricultural protocols.

University Library

The University Librarian is in charge of library administration and reports directly to the Vice-Chancellor. There is also a library committee. There are four major divisions in the library: Collection Development, Technical Services, Documents and Serials, and Readers Services.

The library has about 20,000 volumes covering all aspects of agricultural science and allied fields; 5,000 volumes of reference materials, including dictionaries, encyclopedias, directories, and research reports of student research projects, including theses and dissertations. The university has the 2005 version of the Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL). TEEAL is a collection of 130 major agricultural journals, contained in 426 CD-ROMs. The library is connected to the Internet, and subscribes to more than 500 print journal titles, local and foreign, as well as national newspapers and magazines. The library has a seating capacity for only 148 readers. There are six computers in the library. Other equipment includes overhead projectors, display screen, and public address system.

Staff

The library currently has 41 staff members. Positions and other details are shown in the accompanying tables

Table 1: Staff positions

Rank	No.	%
University Librarian	1	2.44
Deputy University Librarian	-	-
Senior Librarian	1	2.44
Librarian I	-	-
Librarian II	5	12.2
Assistant Librarian	1	2.44
Chief Library Officer	-	-
Asst.Chief	-	-
Principal Library Officer	-	-
Senior Library Officer	2	4.88
Senior Library Officer	3	7.32
Higher Library Officer	1	2.44
Library Attendants	8	19.51
Library Assistants	6	14.63
Senior Lib. Assistants	1	2.44
Prin.Library Asst.	3	7.32
Bindery Assistant	1	2.44
Library Porter	1	2.44
Typists	3	7.32
Clerical Officer	1	2.44
Messenger/Cleaner	3	7.32
Driver/Mechanic	1	2.44
Total	41	100

Library attendants constitute the bulk of the staff with 8 (19.51%), followed by library assistants with 6 (14.63%). In the senior category, Librarians II formed the majority with 5 (12.20%), followed by Senior Library officers.

Professional Status of Staff

Table 2 Analysis of Staff by Professional Status

Status	No:	%
Librarians	8	19.51
Library Officers	7	17.07
Admin/Technical	8	19.51
Other Library Staff	18	43.90
Total	41	100

Librarians belong to the university's professional cadre and are also academic staff, and have the same privileges as teaching staff. The librarians are members of the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU). The Technical/Administrative category includes typists, clerical officer, messenger/cleaner, and mechanic/driver. Other staff include library assistants, bindery assistant, and the library porter.

Staff Qualification

Table 3: Educational Qualifications of Staff

Qualification	No.	%
B.Sc. + MLS + PhD	1	2.44
BLIS+PGD(ICT)+MLS	1	2.44
B.Sc. + MLS	4	12.20
HND+PGD+MLS	2	4.88
BLIS, B.ED, B.A	1	2.44
HND	4	9.76
OND	2	4.88
HSC	1	2.44
WASC/GCE/SSCE/TC, etc.	23	56.10
FSLC	1	2.44
Total	41	100.02

West African School Certification or its equivalent is the most common educational credential in the library, with 23 (56.10%), followed by those with B.SC and MLS. Only one person has a PhD, though two others are pursuing doctoral studies.

Table 4: Staff Allocation in the Library

Department	Librarians	Library Officers	Others	Total	%
Administration	1	-	4	5	12.20
Tech Services	4	4	8	16	39.02
Readers Services	1	2	10	13	31.71
Serials	1	1	4	6	14.63
On Study Leave	1	-	-	1	2.44
Total	8	7	26	41	100

The Technical Services Department has the largest number of staff with 16 (39.02%), followed by Reader Services with 13 (31.71%). Technical Services also has more librarians and library officers than Readers Services.

Responsibilities of Departments

Administration

The University Librarian exercises general control over the library staff, funds, equipment, and activities. Other members of staff in this department are a clerical officer, a messenger/cleaner, a typist, and a driver/mechanic. Equipment in this office includes photocopiers, computer, etc.

Collection Development Department

A principal library officer, with a master's degree in library science, heads the department, whose staff includes another library officer, assistants, and a typist. The department coordinates activities connected with identification, selection, acquiring, processing, circulation, and shelving serials.

Readers Service Department

This department is responsible for ordering and acquisition of book and non-book material, through purchase, gift and exchanges, or donations. The department also keeps accession records and other relevant files, as well as book selection aids such as *Books in Print*.

Technical Services Department

This is a four-unit department headed by a senior librarian. The units in the department are Bindery, Cataloguing and Classification, Computer, and Audio-visual. Bindery and Cataloguing are headed by a librarian. Computer and Audio-visual are headed by a single librarian who in addition to BLIS and MLS also holds PGD (ICT).

Bindery

This unit of Technical Services does re-binding and repairs of worn or damaged books, binding of journals, student projects, and private jobs from staff and the University

community. The unit is well-equipped with binding equipment and materials including blocking machine.

Cataloguing and Classification

This unit handles the cataloguing and classification of library materials, card production, maintenance of the card catalogue, indexing and abstracting services among others. The unit is equipped with the latest editions of cataloguing and classification tools, which include Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules (AACR2) Library of Congress.

Public Services

Units in this department are Circulation and Reference. A librarian heads Circulation, while a principal library officer whose qualification includes a BLS heads Reference. Newly-processed library materials come to one of these units, which is where the largest number of library staff are located. The reference unit handles reference queries and takes direct charge of reference materials.

Discussion

Strengths

The strength of the library lies in collections, equipment, and TEEAL. The staff are well qualified and dedicated. The collection is small but is very selective and efficient in meeting the expectations of users and the mandate of the library. The bindery is particularly strong in equipment, as is the computer unit houses. The outstanding strength of the unit is TEEAL, which is the first and the only of its kind south of the Niger. Approximately 130 leading journals covering all aspects of agriculture and allied fields are contained in 426 compact disks, and are housed in this unit.

Weaknesses

The major weakness of this library is the lack of proper and functional library card catalogue. Most books are processed and sent to Readers Services without catalogue cards. It is impossible for library users to know what the library has by author, title, or subject. Users are left with no option but go directly to shelves to browse and by chance get what they are looking for.

Journals are not being catalogued, classified, or indexed. When journals arrive, they are put on display racks, after being checked in using a notebook. Back issues are "dumped" on the shelves. Users are left wandering blindly through display racks and shelves searching for a journal that may contain information to satisfy their needs.

Another area of weakness is the bindery unit. Despite having state-of-the art equipment, the bindery is under-used.

Lack of space for users and staff is also an area of weakness. The library has only the seating capacity for 148 to serve the entire university community of students (full-time, part-time, and postgraduates), academic and administrative staff, researchers, and so on.

Opportunities

Opportunities certainly exist for the library. They include:

- Training

As other university libraries are doing, the library could organize short training programmes on topics like cataloguing and classification, indexing and abstracting, the practical use of ICT in libraries, to name a few.

- Research

There are numerous areas in library and information science that would be fruitful research topics for library staff.

- Publication of journals by the library
- Indexing and abstracting services for use inside and outside the university community.
- Documentation of the activities of institution's colleges
- Binding

The bindery unit should be commercialized and members of the university community encouraged to patronize the bindery. There is a ready market if one imagines the volume of binding going on in the university environment, particularly student projects.

Threats

One of the major threats that face the library is that of safety and security problems (Ugah, 2002). Issues include the library building itself, the collections, the staff, and the users.

Recommendations

- The library management should build on the strength of the library by improving on the collections in terms of size, quality, currency, relevance, availability, accessibility, and the provision of multiple copies by purchasing or duplicating.
- Staff need motivation. The library should be upgraded to the status of a college and all the departments in the library treated like those in the colleges, as is the case with the University of Calabar, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, and many others, the University Librarian should be designated "Professor and Dean of the Library."
- The library's card catalogue urgently needs more cabinets.
- Journals should be catalogued and indexed for effective retrieval.
- The bindery should be put to proper use and even commercialized.
- All the students should be encouraged to patronize the bindery.
- More space for more reading is needed, as are more chairs and tables to increase the seating capacity.
- More computers should be provided and the library should be on the path to partial or complete automation in line with global trends.
- There is the need for security inside and outside the library, by providing close circuit television (CCTV) for effective electronic surveillances, along with other methods..

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