# CIRCULATION SERVICES POLICY ON BOOK LOAN: STATE OF - ART IN CROSS RIVER UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY CALABAR LIBRARY

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## ABSTRACT

*This paper assesses the "state of the art'' in the application and implementation of circulation services policy on book loan to students in the Cross River University of Technology Calabar Library. A survey design was used with a sample size of 300 students randomly selected. A researcher-made instrument ''Book Loan Questionnaire was constructed for data collection. Simple percentages were employed in data analysis''. The study revealed that, the "library's opening hours is 8.00am to 6.00pm from Mondays to Fridays during sessions, the library loan out books to students who request to borrow, students occasionally borrow books from the library, students are entitled to borrow two books for two weeks, issuance of recall notices on overdue books is occasionally and students support the idea of reviewing Circulation Services Policy of the university library. Recommendation is also proffered.*

***KEYWORDS:*** *Circulation Services Policy*

## INTRODUCTION

Intellectual access to recorded information has, quite properly, been a major preoccupation of librarians. Its importance has been reflected in the effort devoted to the design and creation of bibliographies, catalogues, classification schemes, and other devices that help establish the existence of individual documents and their relevance to specific enquires. However, intellectual access needs to be accompanied by physical access if the documents are to be used. ''The essentially logistical problem of making books and other library materials available to library users has received far less attention in the literature of librarianship than has the discussion of intellectual access'' (Bunklnd, 1975) cited in (Bassey and Iyishu, 2007).

The constitution of library collection or library stock depends on the institutional needs. The first step to take when establishing an overall collection is "to identify the institutional objectives that the library or learning resource centre is supporting. (Lucker, 1997) cited in Bassey and Iyishu (2007).

A library is the primary means of raising the literary awareness of the community and therefore should contain only the best literature. A library should select books and non-book materials that will develop and enrich the lives of the users being served by the library. This will not be achieved if resources in the library are not quality resources and if they are not relevant. And if an academic library is to be firmly embedded into the new education system, it has to become a resource centre, ''the centre of the learning process and the hub of the curriculum'' (Omoniwa, 1982) in (Nkanu, 2005). The bedrock of any library, therefore, is the quality and quantity of information resources available. It is not the

magnificence of the library building nor the number of quantity of staff available, though these may play useful roles in library efficiency. An important way of accessing any library is by examining the quality and quantity of its collection.

The library of Cross River University of Technology is facing the problem of inadequate library materials, which presumably is one of the most serious problems currently plaguing academic libraries in Nigeria education system. This may be due to the expensive nature of the high cost of library materials, especially for the Cross River University of Technology library which is not adequately funded. This has adversely affected the university's library collection size, which in turn affect in one way or the other, the application and implementation of circulation services policy on book loan to students in the university. This paper therefore assesses the implementation of circulation services policy on book loan to students in the library of Cross River University of Technology Calabar by determining the conditions with which the library loan books to students, how often students loan books from the library and how often the library send out overdue notices to recall overdue books loaned to students, the number of books a student is entitle to loan and the period for use, the amount of money students pay as fines for overdue books, why the library does not loan books on reserved shelf and the opinion of students with respect to the review of the existing book loan policy of the university library.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The National Policy on Education has identified the library as one of the most important aspects of educational services. Libraries are established to support the teaching, learning and research activities of their parent institutions, an objective which is achieved through a systematic acquisition, storage, and organization in all fields pertinent to the goals of the institution. Therefore, the importance of the university library, and dissemination of entire forms of recorded and undocumented information and learning processes cannot be over-emphasized (Lasa, 1994) cited in (Nkanu, 2005). According to Bello (2008), a library can be described as a vital part of educational evolution because without books and other printed materials like journals, magazines, newspapers as well as non-print materials like films audio tapes and records and micro films to mention a few, an academic library cannot meet its user's needs.

Line (1987) cited in Bassey and Iyishu (2007) is of the opinion that library collection can be evaluated by both quantitative and qualitative methods. The absolute size of a library collection is one characteristic by which it may be evaluated, in that a particular library is unlikely to function effectively if its collection is below a certain minimum collection. According to Obokoh (1980) cited in Echezona and Asogwa (2011), the basic function of the academic library is to provide the materials necessary to supplement the teaching-learning programmes of the institution at all levels, that there is the need for the provision of a wide variety of up-to-date information materials and rapid changes in academic programmes. He further says, in particular, "there is need for recent issues of a variety of other local and foreign journal titles to enable students and scholars to keep abreast with developments in the fields''.

Lawal (2002) opines that unfettered pursuit of scholarship and academic excellence in educational institutions cannot be realized without well-equipped libraries with up-to-date books, journals and comfortable environment in which users can study. Lokey (1996) cited in Bassey and Iyishu (2007) says that in order for students (users) to have access to complete educational experience, library resources and services must be adequate. But in spite of the increasing availability of on-line researches, there exist valuable research works available in only academic and research libraries. He further notes that whether students are taking short-cut in their research strategies due to convenience or access restriction, the library is still a key component of a quality education vis-à-vis quality cum availability of adequate relevant information resources".

According to Nkanu (2005), the success or failure in the implementation of any book loan policy is solely dependent on the availability of a library's collection since no one library can loan to students more than what it has acquired. He further says, what determines the size of a library collection from which students can borrow as many times as possible within a given period of time depends to a large extent on the size composition of the students body, size and composition of the faculties, size and composition of non-teaching staff, nature of curriculum method of instruction, the amount of financial support and proximity of other libraries with relevant collections.

Igben (2002), further observed that no library can really be self-sufficient to meet all borrowing demands of its users. That, in large cities where there are large collection, students and faculty members can register to enable them have borrowing right in such libraries, to enable them have full reading and borrowing rights or go through their libraries which arrange to obtain the required material from them on inter library loan basis. Ikhizama (2002) cited in Nkanu, (2005) noted that where libraries have to exist, it is necessary to stock more materials so as to meet the information needs of students. Undoubtedly, the heart of a library lies strictly in the size of its collection, this essentially means according to Egunjobi and Olanrenwaju (2002), that the quality of the materials in the collection of a library determines the strength of the system. That the library as an ever-growing system need to add to its collection regularly in other to keep abreast of new development.

The major role of academic libraries is to provide quickly the resources users need for teaching, learning, recreation and research. For that mission, the reader's services division in libraries in Nigerian Universities is the image and the public relations outfit of the library. It is a place where staff and patrons have direct or face-to-face interactions. As the hallmark of library services, readers register, search, borrow, return and renew books, photocopy, consult, obtain clearance etc. (Echezonma & Asogwa 2011).

According to Nwalo (2003) lending books to the clientele is one of the major functions in libraries. Every library he says has a system of giving out books on loan to users (charging) and receiving the books back from users at the expiration of the loan period (discharging). He went further to say that, any system adopted by a library to lend books to users and receive them back is known as a charging system.

Ogar (2016) says charging and discharging of library materials mean borrowing and returning of library materials in the library. That one of the greatest strength of the library is its disposition to permit out-of-library use of books. He says, since the library operates within a time frame, this opportunity enables a user under time constraint to take a needed book out for home use. The lending or charging process involves taking a proper record of the book being borrowed, the particulars of the borrower and instruction on when to return the material.

According to Nkebem & Iyishu (2002), all library operations or services border on information services. That library operates as securing, classifying, up-keeping, archiving and lending agent of printed and non-printed materials to library users.

In the other hand, every library needs some measure of regulations that should govern its use. The main aim of library services policy is to ensure that the library and its resources are available to all users and shared on a fair basis (National Teachers Institute, 1990). This policy has to explain the rules relating to the use of library materials, indicate which kind of books can be borrowed and for how long, the charges for overdue, damaged or lost books. In line with these, Bernard (1998) cited in Nkanu (2005), maintained that library policies and procedures should be clearly understood before

the library is opened to users. That library procedures, as they pertain to whatever group or organization the library serves, should be pested so that patrons will know the rules or policies of the library. He further maintained that, users of the library should be informed of the library's policy regarding library hours i.e. how many hours a day the library will be open and what days of the week, who may use the library and areas of services, how many books may be borrowed at one time; standard period of loan; will renewals be permitted and for how long, shall overdue reminders be sent out, shall overdue fines be charged and how much; what about book, lost etc.

Buckland, Kernaghan and Weir (1979) cited in Iyishu & Nkanu (2013), note that through attention to availability rates of and through measures taken subsequently libraries were able to raise the satisfaction rates among patrons from 60 percent to 86 percent. They were particularly interested in changes that could be effected through modified loan and duplication policies. They went further to say that the more effective a library recall policy for the timely return of materials from all borrowers, the more frequently the library will be used.

Scholfield, Copper & Waters (1987) cited in Iyishu & Nkanu (2013) in their survey reported a failure rate of 44 percent in the main collection of an academic library and had a circulation loan period of two weeks. The same library when it introduced 4-day loan period had failure rate of only 31 percent.

According to Busayo (2007) who conducted a study on book theft as a menace to library growth in university of Ado Ekiti revealed that (55.26%) showed clearly that library staff do not collude with users to steal library books, though; the users (49.47%) claimed that the non-loan policy of the library was responsible for book theft.

In a related study on ''Library Use Malpractices'', which holding on to borrowed materials after they are due back in the library constitutes one of the malpractices, Bello (2008) observed that, the issue of returning books late to the library, 306 (65.38%) sampled suggested that users who return late should be made to pay fine, 96 (20.51%) agreed that such users should be warned, while 42 (8.97%) suggested that such users should be suspended from making use of the library. Ordinarily, when books are kept longer than the period, libraries will normally charge fine for overdue. However, the fine paid normally varied from one library to the other depending on the policy of that library. The fine is usually very small, unless the borrower let it accumulate.

Oti (2000) in Iyishu and Nkanu (2013) also reports that, in the "Federal Polytechnic Nkede, lecturers are issued with two tickets with a loan period of two weeks''. Other senior staff collect three tickets with a loan period of four weeks. Students are allowed two tickets and a loan period of two weeks. Junior staff of the school are issued with two tickets for duration of two weeks. The number of books allowed is represented by the number of tickets issued and the loan period allowed varies from one academic institution to another. The borrowing policy on reserved books is of no significance to students because these are books, which are removed from the regular collection to a special shelf for some time. Their use is restricted to a limited period, say one or two hours. Borrowing them is usually limited to one or two hours of use in the library.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The area used for the study was the library of Cross River University of Technology Calabar. The population was made up of all undergraduate students of the university using the library. A sample size of 300 students was randomly sampled. "Book Loan Questionnaire" (BLO) constructed by the

researcher was the instrument for data collection. The three hundred questionnaires distributed, were all well completed and returned. Simple percentages were used for data analysis.

## DATA ANALYSIS

**Table: 1: Analysis of Hours Library Open to Students on Work Days During Session**

| Hours of Opening During Session | Actual Frequency | Percentage Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| 8.00am – 10.00pm (Monday-Friday) | 55 | 18.3 |
| 8.00am-6.00pm (Monday-Friday) | 212 | 70.7 |
| 8.00am-11.00pm (Monday-Friday) | 33 | 11 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100%** |

Table 1 shows the hours the university library open to students during session in work days (Mondays to Fridays). Students were asked to confirm which of these hours the library opens. From the result presented in the table above 8.00am-6.00pm (Mondays-Fridays) accounted for 212 frequency count representing 70.7% in agreement with the university library's policy on opening hours. As a result of certain factors that bordered on security, the university library management committee had before now ordered the library to be opening and closing between 8.00am to 6.00pm. The opening and closing hours of 8.00am to 10.00pm and 8.00am to 11.00pm which accounted for 55 and 33 frequency counts representing 18.3% and 11% respectively are library hours that are no more in operation in the library. The university library does not open on Saturdays and during holidays.

**Table: 2: Analysis of Factors that Determine Book Borrowing to Students in the Library**

| Factors that Determine Book Borrowing | Actual Frequency | Percentage Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Non availability of enough books in the library | 51 | 17 |
| Books available in the library | 17 | 5.7 |
| Students are not interested in borrowing books | 34 | 11.3 |
| Books are borrowed or loaned only to students who request to borrow | 127 | 42.3 |
| Books on reserve are borrowed to students on special directive | 71 | 23.7 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100%** |

The analysis in table 2 above revealed that in the university library, books are only borrowed or loaned to students who indicate interest to borrow which accounted for the highest frequency of 127 representing 42.3%. This is against student's rumors that the university library does not grant book loan to students. Next is books on reserved, non-availability of enough books, students non interest in borrowing and obsolesce of library books which accounted for frequency counts of 71, 51, 34 and 17 representing 237%, 1.3% and 51.7% respectively.

**Table 3: Analysis of Extent of Student Borrowing Habit**

| Students' Borrowing Habit | Actual Frequency | Percentage Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Regularly | 43 | 14.3 |
| Occasionally | 206 | 68.7 |
| Never at all | 51 | 17 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100%** |

The analysis of students borrowing habit shown in table 3 above shows that students borrow books occasionally from the library with the highest frequency counts of 206 representing 68.7%. This is followed by 51 and 43 frequency counts representing 17% and 14.3% respectively of regular and never at all.

**Table: 4: Analysis of Number of Books Students Borrow and Duration for Use**

| Hours and Duration of Books Borrowed | Actual Frequency | Percentage Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| 1 book for one week | 13 | 4.3 |
| 2 books for one week | 77 | 25.7 |
| 2 books for two weeks | 186 | 62 |
| 3 books for two weeks | 21 | 7 |
| Any number with no time unit | 3 | 1 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100%** |

Table 4 shows the analysis of the number of books students borrow and the duration for use. Among the frequency counts analyzed, 2 books for two weeks has the highest frequency count of 186 representing 62%, the other frequency counts have 7% 4.3% and 1% respectively are not applicable to the policy of the library.

**Table 5: Analysis of Frequency of Recall Notices Issued for Overdue Books**

| Issuance of Recall Notices | Actual Frequency | Percentage Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Regularly | 91 | 30.3 |
| Occasionally | 173 | 57.7 |
| Never at all | 36 | 12 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100%** |

Table 5 shows frequency counts in relation to how frequent the library issues recall notices to borrowers of overdue books. From the analysis occasional issuance has the highest frequency count of 173 representing 57.7%. Regular issuance and never at all account for 91 and 36, representing 30% and 12% respectively.

**Table 6: Analysis of Students View of Review of Book Loan Policy**

| Students View | Actual Frequency | Percentage Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| Requires review to meet up with current trends | 224 | 74.7 |
| Only amount paid as fines requires review | 19 | 6.3 |
| Only the number of books borrowed and the duration for use require review | 36 | 12 |
| **Total** | **300** | **100%** |

Table 6 above, reveals a highest frequency count of ''224 representing 74.7 with 57 and 19 representing 19% and 6.3%'' respectively.

## DISCUSSION

Libraries adopt different opening hours according to environment most suitable to them. In Cross River University of Technology library, "8.00am to 6.00pm Mondays to Fridays during school sessions has been officially adopted''. Table 1 above confirms this with the highest frequency count and percentage of 212 (or 70.7%). Bernard (1988) cited in Nkanu (2005) is in support of the view that library users should be well informed of opening hours i.e. how many hours a day the library will be open and what days of the week by concerned authorities.

Rumor within the university campus among students has it that the library does not borrow books o students. This is not so, the fact that students complain of non-availability of enough books and obsolesce of the few available ones should not be used as basis for conclusion that the library does not borrow books.

The study as shown from the analysis that the library loan books to students who request to borrow and this accounted for 127 (or 42.3%). This is also supported by Oti (2000) cited in Iyishu and Nkanu (2013) reports, that in Federal Polytechnic Nekede, lecturers are issued with two tickets with a loan period of two weeks, senior staff collect three

tickets with a loan period of four weeks and students are allowed two tickets and a loan period of two weeks. The number of books allowed is represented by the number of tickets issued and the loan period allowed varies from one academic institution to another. He further says that the borrowing policy on reserved books is of no significance to students because these are books which are removed from the regular collection to a special shelf for some time and their use is restricted to a limited period of time, say one or two hours, like in the library, the same policy is applied; reserved books are rarely given out to students because of limited reading space capacity in the library.

Another aspect that appears to be a fashion among students is their attitude to borrowing library materials. The study revealed that students are not keen in borrowing from the library; this fact is confirmed in table 3 which analysis the frequency of students borrowing habit with occasional borrowing ranking highest with 206 (or 68.7%). The library adopts the policy of borrowing to students 2 books for two weeks is also confirmed by the study which has the highest frequency count of 186 (or 62%). This is in agreement with Oti's (2000) report of what is obtained at Nekede Polytechnic Library where students are allowed to borrow 2 books and a loan period of 2 weeks. On the whole students are of the view that book loan policy of the library be reviewed to meet up with current trends as shown in table 6, with frequency count of 224 (or 74.6%).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Libraries are established to support teaching, learning and research activities, hence it becomes obligatory on them to adequately have books and other materials in order to meet up with numerous needs of its users, especially students. Universities that have few volumes of collection hardly have enough to loan to its users even if there exist a circulation services policy. Most striking in mind is the fact that what determines the size of a library collection from which students can borrow as many times as possible within a given period of time depends to a large extent on the size and composition of the students body, size and composition of the faculties etc. The library as an ever-growing system needs a policy that would ensure that its resources are available to all users and shared on a fair basis. Where the reverse is the case, library books and other associate materials will be lost unnoticed, book loan operational policy will be grossly abused, library use malpractices will be on the increase and the overall aim of the application and implementation practically of the policy will be defeated.

Therefore, having confirm the official opening hours and days of operations, and also established the fact as confirmed by the study that students borrow books from the library, and this is those who are interested, students though not regularly but occasionally borrow books from the library, the number and duration for use of borrowed books conforms with the existing policy of the library, etc. It is hereby recommended that, circulation services policy on book loan particularly to students should be reviewed to meet up with current changes in the provision of library and information services in the university library in particular and academic libraries of other institutions in general.

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