Academic libraries are libraries that are attached to tertiary institutions and which include universities, polytechnics and colleges of Education. College and university libraries come under the umbrella of academic libraries. They are libraries that maintain large collections of detailed research materials for advanced students and scholars. Madu (2004) stated that academic libraries extend library services beyond just making materials available. They offer other assistance to users, such as assistance of Reference Services, Current Awareness Services (CAS), Reprographic Services, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Document Delivery, Inter-library Loan Services, User Education Services and others. Moore (1992) opined that libraries are now focused on giving priority to user services. The focus of library services rests on satisfying the information needs of individual or groups who will make use of the acquired library resources, in essence, it is imperative for libraries to evaluate their performances to know if the services provided meet user expectation.

The hallmark of library’s product according to Oti (2000) is service. Services are the most important commodity that any library can offer to its users. Therefore it stands to reason that what constitutes a good or a bad library is the availability or non availability of competent, user oriented staff. A library that has well trained and academically conscious librarians, as well as well-trained and conscientious support staff, has all it takes to perform to its users (Nkanu, 2007).

Concept Clarifications
(a) The Concept of Perception
In every event, people see what they want to see. People do not therefore perceive events or objects the way such events or objects are. People perceive events or objects for what these events or objects mean to them. In that light, perception is the unique and inevitably private views people have of events or stimuli in the environment external to them. Perception is the process of becoming aware of what comes in through, sense impression. It is a process whereby one gains awareness of stimuli, objects and situations that impinge upon and excite the sense receptors (Oladele, 1984).

Perception involves the perceiver and perceived (percept). It involves selecting organizing and interpreting changes in the material environment. The interpretation of what is perceived is influenced by the perceiver’s prior experience and the condition he is in (Isangedighi, 2007). For Teas (1995), perception is unique to each person. It is a three-step process of selection, organization and interpretation; it has also been found that perceptions differ due to differences in gender. Millson-Martual and Menon (1995) believe that academic libraries should attempt to meet or exceed the perception of their users.
(b) The Concept of Academic Library
An academic library is an integral part of a college or university. It is usually regarded as an instrument of instruction. This means that, teaching in the classroom would depend more on library than on textbooks. This is why academic library is regarded as an integral part of the teaching programme. The academic libraries can be grouped into three categories such as “school libraries, college libraries and university libraries”. “The schools, college and universities are the institutions that impart formal education to the students. These academic institutions are supposed to have rich libraries to feed the students, teachers, and research scholars in meeting their day-to-day needs related to study and research and to supplement the classroom teaching. The libraries are the hearts of such institutions without them the body cannot last long (Oyedum, 2006).

(c) The Concept of Quality
The concept of quality is not a new phenomenon for library and information science professionals as it is rooted in library philosophy and principles. For example, Ranganathan’s laws of library science particularly the fourth law “SAVE THE TIME OF THE READER” implicitly focuses on quality of library services from users’ perspective. This law views the quality through efficient catalogues, self-instructive signal guides, knowledgeable staff, proper shelving, error free records, good documentation services, and adequate finance.

Quality of information service depends among others on the organization of the library space, its accessibility, open access to collection and user’s comfort of work. A common factor of several concepts and approaches to quality is the focus on users’ expectation and needs. Quality of services is affected by budgetary constraints, management policies, design and condition of facilities, personnel decisions and employee morale (Reitz, 2004).

(d) Qualities of Libraries
Adetoun (2004) stated that any good library should have the following qualities. It should;

i. Have relevant resources. The library collection should be appropriate for work in the field of study or subject area chosen by the management of the library. A library collection relevant to the needs of users is essential. Uofia (1998) suggested that the library stock should bear direct relevance to its tertiary level in all curricula fields and be suitable for departmental research and instructional activities as well as being fit to supplement, complement and implement lecturers and user’s need.

ii. Availability of the resources. Books are meant to be used for their thought contents, for the vast and rich knowledge which they carry. But this is only possible when library make them available to the readers in the library. This presupposes that the library should be well stocked with information materials, which should be made readily available to users in all fields of specialization (Bellah 1980). Also facilitate retrieval of resources available in the collection.

iii. Ensure that adequate storage is provided for the collection. There must be space for the materials, proper arrangement of these materials and adequate security measures adopted.

iv. Provide access to the collection, this should be facilitated through classification, cataloguing and other arrangements that will make access and retrieval easy for the users.

v. Currency of information source. For libraries to meet the present need of users, it should be able to address the current and the future need of users answers to the Fifth Law of
Ranganathan’s of Library Science, which state that the library is a growing organism (Ranganathan, 1988).

vi. Have trained staff to organize the services in the widest possible sense. Make sure there are strategies and provision for evaluation of the information services. Users’ information needs should be determined by the staff and ways of satisfying such needs should be devised.

**Importance of Library Services**

**Reprographic Services**

i. These services help to reduce the rate of book theft and mutilation of library materials.

ii. It provides photocopying of library materials which users are not allowed to borrow, example encyclopedia (Nkanu, 2007).

iii. It helps in the preservation and conservation of library materials.

iv. It saves space. The reproduction of library materials into microform format and optical format like CD-ROM has saved space in various libraries.

v. It assists in the reproduction of rare books, out of print and archival materials for the purpose of storage and use.

vi. It facilitates the reproduction of exact copies of document quickly.

vii. It enhances the use of library materials

viii. It promotes interlibrary co-operation/resources sharing.

**Circulation Services**

i. Registration of users.

ii. Renewal of membership on expiration.

iii. Issuing of books on loan.

iv. Reserving books on demand.

v. Charging and discharging books during loans services.

vi. Assisting users in tracing library materials of their interest and providing every other necessary guide for maximum accessibility of the resources.

vii. Selecting damaged books for repairs.

viii. Writing overdue notices to defaulters with library materials beyond the stipulated time frame; and charging overdue fines.

ix. Shelving, shelf reading and dusting; giving readers advisory services.

x. Keeping vigilance over the users to avoid losing library materials.

xi. Checking movement around the shelf area.

xii. Receiving processed books from the technical unit.

xiii. Keeping statistical records.

**Reference Services**

i. Answering reference questions.

ii. Assisting users in information search or providing reference information.

iii. Keeping statistical records of usage to determine demand pattern and level of patronage.

iv. Receiving and recording periodicals and newspapers.

v. Shelving, shelf reading and dusting.

vi. Keeping records of unanswered questions.
vii. Compiling bibliographies and periodic reports.
viii. Communicating with information bodies to secure current information to satisfy users’
demand.
ix. Providing photocopying services.

Internet Services
i. Directing and executing search through the digital libraries in different websites.
ii. Compiling web directions, web addresses and search guides.
iii. Identifying and downloading new programmes and software for executing tasks on the
computer.
iv. Designing and compiling subject search headings to aid users carry out searches on the
computer and the internet.
v. Identifying and acquiring CD-ROMs containing texts and references and downloading same
in the personal computers.

Current Awareness Services (CAS)
i. Current Awareness Service is a routine system of disseminating current documents
particularly journals.
ii. It helps in the population method of keeping people’s knowledge up-to-date. That is, keeping
users’ abreast of development in their area of specialization.
iii. It helps in the display of current journals.
iv. Circulating lists of items in the journals instead of the journals themselves.
v. Accession list. Promote current awareness over wide area by the mere listing of new titles
(Akintude, 2010).
vi. It saves the users’ time
vii. It helps users to organize and mediate the information that are needed to conduct research.
viii. It reviews publications that arrive immediately into the library and selects information
pertinent to users’ needs.

Users’ Perception of Academic Libraries in Akwa Ibom State

Both manual and automated services ought to be available in the library. But users often
prefer automated services, because they have become aware of the capabilities of automated library
services. Most of the Nigerian university libraries have catalogues that have grown too tall to be easily
used; the number of users is so many that manual services are no longer satisfactory.

Users are not interested in spending hours at the library looking for documents that may or
may not contain needed data or information. They want remote access to content and information
tailored at individual need. Madu (2004) opined that users are seeking an information service that;
is timely in its delivery, such as responding to desk enquiries, meeting their needs, is easy to understand
and use, and that is delivered by courteous and knowledgeable staff.

Adeyemi (1991) opined that users expect the reading environment to command respect, to be
c conducive for study and research. They expect their libraries to be compartmentalized in a manner
that segregates services readers from leisure readers. Also Adetoun (2004) posited that users’ expect adequate number of seats. In addition they expect good library buildings with adequate infrastructure, air-conditioned and humidity controlled. Conference and seminar rooms are also expected of the library. These are unfortunately lacking in majority of Nigerian university libraries.

The users expect books that are current, as well as the preservation and conservation of both the current and outdated materials. The users are most of the time interested in books and journals that are current and relevant. Abolaji (2000) opined that users expect information storage and retrieval processes to be rapidly automated. One of these is the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) because it is a system that allows the user to quickly and effectively search the computer held files of a library. It is often user-oriented or user-friendly. The computer-based retrieval is faster, more flexible, more comprehensive and more up-to-date than manual systems. Online catalogue are easier to control than card catalogues. It is easier to revise correct online and so the quality of the catalogue is enhanced.

Conclusion

Libraries are services centers aimed at meeting or satisfying the information needs of their users. For users’ perception therefore to occur in academic libraries, there must equally be qualitative and effective services provided to meet information needs of the users’. Users’ perceptions are greatly influenced by the quality of information services, staff, especially the librarians, physical facilities, library environment, user education and internet services. The libraries must explore all available means to deliver quality library services which stand the test of time and which will ultimately lead to users’ satisfaction.

The Way Forward

i. Evaluation of services should be done on a regular basis to ensure that services are relevant and useful to its users.
ii. Libraries must provide internet services and relevant databases for its users.
iii. Current and relevant materials should be provided in the library.
iv. More effort and finances should be made by the parent institutions of these academic libraries in providing qualitative information services by embracing modern technologies being presented, as this is what users’ desire in their libraries.
v. Library staff should be sent on in-service training to ensure quality library services.
vi. Photocopying machines should be kept in the entire unit in the library to prevent theft.
vii. New technological and computerized method of information storage and retrieval should also be used to avoid waste of time by users’ when using the library.
viii. Libraries should be spacious and properly ventilated to ensure comfort of patrons. There should be good lighting, high standard of sanitary condition; and reading seats and tables should also be adequately supplied to users.
ix. Due to the dynamic technological era in which libraries find themselves the need arises to adopt and use more of information technology in solving their users’ information needs as the days of manual delivery of library services are fast getting over.
References


