Library Appraisal: A Measure of Users Perception

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ABSTRACT

University library plays an important role in providing and serving the different information needs of its academics users. The appraisal of the library is based on how well it serves and provides these needs. Quality as seen by users is important to measure its effectiveness and functionality. This is to provide information on how the university library is perceived by users, with a view of improving service delivery and enhancing the effective management of library services. This descriptive study determined the perception of library users at ISAT U Miagao Campus, Miagao, Iloilo. The respondents were the 478 users of the library composed of 378 students and 107 faculty chosen using Convenient Sampling. A validated researcher made instrument was used in gathering the data. Means, standard deviation, ANOVA to test differences and Pearsons r to test relationships were utilized as statistical tools. The findings revealed that generally, the users' perception of the library as a whole as well as to collection, personnel, services and physical set-up revealed to be very good. Likewise, faculty and students perception toward such parameters was also very good. Furthermore, there was no significant difference in the perception of users as to collection, personnel, services and physical set up. Finally, there is no significant relationship between the students and faculty perception of the library. Though the result of the users perception was very good, it is recommended that the different areas of the library such as collections, personnel, services and physical set-up need to continuously upgrade to provide excellent services to the users.

Introduction

In the present time, library is the central part of any standard educational institution. This is because, as a resource, it occupies a central and primary place serving the functions of teaching, learning, and research in the creation of new knowledge, promotion of current information in professional practice and transmission to posterity of the learning and culture of the present and past age (Mostofa&Hossain, 2014).

University libraries are an integral part of the education system, how they are perceived determines their smooth existence and value to the users. Academic Libraries should therefore contribute to the goals of the system as a whole and respond to the changing social needs (Namugera,2014). The library is one of the most effective service institutions for learning. Thus, to effectively serve its purpose, customers must be provided effectively of its services. Hence, University library plays an important role in providing and serving the different information needs of its academics users.

Large amount of budget are invested by universities to library resources and services to improve efficiency. Library users can see, define and judge quality service of the library. Thus,

appraising the library will determine the extent to which the library either meets the users expectation or not. The appraisal of the library is based on how well it serves and provides these needs. It is an ongoing process of finding out how users think of the services provided to them.

Library patron is very important in the practice of librarianship because the library process revolves around them. Moreover, the goal of any library (whether public, special, academic or school library), is to enable the user have access to the available resources and maximize its usage. The means of accomplishing high level of patronage of the library by users' is through the provision of efficient and effective library services. The user is, therefore, very critical to the services of a library. Hence, the user of a library must be constantly asked to access the services and resources provided as this will help to improve upon its services.

For more than a decade, librarians and other academic leaders have recognized the importance of assessing their library services. Appraisal of library services has been conducted to comply with the principles governing the discipline which advocate for, 'high standards of provision and delivery of library and information services. Through evaluation, areas of service strengths and

weaknesses are identified. This helps decision-makers as well as administrators to strengthen their focus on areas of excellence at the same time addressing service gaps. Appraisal of library services, based on user feedback, can take many forms depending on the objectives of the analysis. The ISAT U Miagao Campus library provides different services for students. The services is set-up to meet the mission, vision, goals and objectives of the university, likewise to support the fourfold function of the university; instruction, research, extension and production program. Library use have been observed to increase mainly because of the rapid increase in student population in the University for the last five years and that the library needs to meet the users demands in the best possible way. Library is considered as one of the busiest department in the university. Almost every day student are tasks to conduct research, assignments, projects, and other paper works to comply with some of the course requirements. Likewise faculty use library as their primary source of information. During this day to day activity, the students as well as the faculty are challenged to obtain their information needs.

In the realization of the significant role of library in the curriculum, and being a professional librarian in the field, the researcher gave much attention to perception of faculty and students to its library. According to Jiang and Wang (2006) perception is the users judgment and evaluation of a service performance received and how it compares to their need. Thus, the researcher is motivated that this will help identify the actual strength and weaknesses of library. Furthermore, it will help determine discrepancies as well as a significant difference between the expectations of library users and the actual quality of service presented and offered in the ISAT U library. Thus, to improve its services this study was conducted.

Moreover, the library needs appraisal to establish standards set by accrediting bodies. The ISAT University library has undergone several evaluations but there was no internal assessment conducted with its actual users. Since the faculty and students are the major users of the library, quality as seen by them is to measure effectiveness and functionality. Faculty and student's perception of the library could reflect how effectively the library provides their need. Therefore, faculty and student's perceptions

should be used as a parameter to measure and evaluate current library services for further improvement and development. This study provided information on how the university library is perceived by its users. This can be viewed as a way of improving service delivery and enhancing the effective management of the library system.

The Problem
This study was conducted to answer the following questions:
1. What are the users' perceptions of the library when taken as a whole and when grouped according to the following parameters?
    a. collection
    b. personnel
    c. services
    d. physical set-up
2. What are the faculty perceptions of the library according to the following parameters?
    a. collection
    b. personnel
    c. services
    d. physical set-up
3. What are the students' perceptions of the library according to the following parameters?
    a. collection
    b. personnel
    c. services
    d. physical set-up
4. Is there significant differences in the library perception of users according to the following parameters:
    a. collection
    b. personnel
    c. services
    d. physical set-up
5. Is there significant relationship between faculty and students' perception of the library?

Hypotheses
In view of the above questions the following hypothesis were formulated:
1. There are no significant differences in the library perception of users according to the parameters collection, personnel, services, and physical set-up.
2. There is no significant relationship between faculty and students perception of the library.

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Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Causal Theory of Perception (Russel,1912). According to this theory, the object of perception plays a causal role in the perception itself. This means our experiences play a great role on how we may have perceived things and events that are present in our environment.

Faculty and students, as primary users of the library, know exactly their needs, thus, with their day to day experiences of using the library, they may be able to identify the effective and efficient services being provided to them. Their perception was based on the fact that they are the ones using the services provided to them.
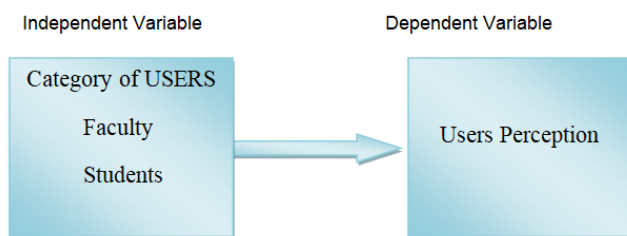

Figure 1. Paradigm of the Study

Review of Related Literature and Studies

Librarians and school administrators are now more concerned on how to provide quality services to users. Thus, several ways could be adopted to evaluate services in view of discovering the status of the library.

In view of this, library appraisal is a tool that may measure how users perceived library services. This may help examine the role of library in providing effective information services to its academic users. According to Bhatti et al., (2015), it help provides feedback for library administrators to evaluate library services and bring necessary improvement in its services if necessary. This review provides different studies conducted to measure users perception in different countries.

One of the studies revealed that Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) and information resources are very positively perceived by most respondents. KNLS libraries are: comparatively better off than universities and other public libraries; are predominantly focused on print documents (books) as preferred sources; readers' mostly begin their search for information on a particular topic; general reading and research purposes and information resources equip users with appropriate knowledge (Nzivo, 2012).

Based on the study of Dahan et al., (2015), respondent feedbacks, showed that the perceived service quality level exceeded users' acceptable level on minimum service and desired service. Specifically, the users are satisfied with the services provided. Results from this study serve as a guide for effective decision making by the library in its administration and resource allocation to ensure accomplishment of the library's vision and mission. Namaganda and Sekikome (2013) study revealed that the majority of respondents rated the library staff highly. This is because library staff answer queries professionally; treat users fairly and impartially, and are readily available to assist users. These findings confirm views expressed by Norlin (2000) who suggested that, "users have three major needs of the reference staff: approachability, ability to answer questions correctly and skills in offering ideas on how to get started".

Contrary to the study of Ashaver and Bem-bura (2013), students in Benue State University Library, Makurdi has a negative perception on the library services rendered by these university libraries. This perception arises from lack of awareness by the students on how to search for information materials and ignorance on information search/retrieval strategies. Also carefully examined is the issue of outdated materials in the libraries. Students are frustrated when in search for current materials on a topic and cannot lay their hands on it easily, they resort to other means of information retrieval to the library which should serve them better and is free for all. Secondly, it was discovered that the attitude of most librarians and library officers toward students in search for information or awareness about library use and services is not encouraging. They should improve on their approach to library users and ensure that information delivery in each of libraries get to all users. Relatively, in the Philippines, the study of Dorado (2010), revealed that the perception of respondents on quality services in terms of library services and personnel was only good. Likewise, the perceived quality services of respondents according to library users group was found significant.

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It was mentioned in the study of Ekeri (2016), that users want to work in highly personalized and flexible environments that present them with the information and services they actually need at any one time. In line with, the operational lessons for the library are twofold: (1) Users want seamless presentation of collections and services, irrespective of where, by whom, or in what format they are managed; and (2) Libraries should consider deploying user-profiling technologies that enable users to configure a networked information environment that meets their specific needs. Further emphasized in the study the four aspects of service quality in a library: excellence, value, conformance to specifications, and meeting and exceeding the expectations of library users. Hence, meeting the needs of library users is the first step towards providing excellent library services.

Finally, it was concluded in the study of Rehman et al., (2011), that we are living in an information age, wherein information explosion and customer care are the major challenges thus it is inevitable for a library to provide richer information to their customers to fulfill their needs. University libraries has a lot of concerns hindering from satisfying users needs. Such realities are truly felt by developed countries and for such reference and information services have been an revolutionary changes to meet different challenges of this information age. According to Hsu et al. (2014), to address the increasing pressure to meet library users' needs in the academic library, librarians should adopt a consistent system that can reflect quick, accurate view of library services. It was also concluded, that, it can allocate their limited resources to be more relevant to the current student population, specifically in the areas of staff professionalism, customer service, modern equipment and facilities while strategically expanding their on-campus and online holdings, then service quality for students will improve in the end.

Methodology

Research Design
Descriptive Design was utilized in this study. This is to describe the present condition of the library as perceived by the respondents.

Respondents
A total of 485 users were chosen as respondents of the study. This was composed of 107 faculty and 378 students. The sample size was determined using the Slovin's formula.

Sampling Technique
Convenient sampling was used to gather data for the study. Users who were at the moment, present in the library were chosen as respondents. This particular selection was based on the reason that these respondents were the actual library users, thus, increases the significant statistical sample for reliability and validity of data gathered.

Instrumentation
A self-made instrument was utilized to get the perception of users. The instrument has undergone validation from experts in the field. The instrument included the four major parameters in the library which included collection, personnel, services and the physical set-up.

Statistical Tools
Mean, standard deviation, ANOVA test for significant differences and Pearson-r to test significant relationship were used as statistical tools.

Results and Discussions

Table 1. Users' Perception of the Library When Taken As A Whole

Parameters	N	M	SD	Description
Collection	485	3.76	.616	Very Good
Personnel	485	3.99	.846	Very Good
Services	485	3.84	.662	Very Good
Physical-Set Up	485	3.96	.670	Very Good

Results on table 1 show that the users' perception of the library when taken as a whole and when grouped according to parameters such as collection (M=3.76), personnel (M=3.99), services (M=3.84) and physical set-up (M=3.96) were very good. This implies that users' perception of the library was positive as to its collection, personnel, services and physical set-up.

In support with, the study of Dahan et al., (2015), showed that the perceived service quality level exceeded users' acceptable level on desired service. Specifically, on the study of Namaganda

and Sekikome (2013), respondents rated the library as high. This is because the library staff answers query professionally, treats users fairly and were readily available to assist users.

Table 2. Faculty Perception of the Library When Taken According to Parameters

Parameters	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Collection	107	3.90	.68696	Very Good
Personnel	107	4.48	.90162	Very Good
Services	107	4.15	1.25714	Very Good
Physical-Set Up	107	4.07	.74049	Very Good

Table 2 reflected that the faculty perceptions of the library according to parameters were as follows: collection (M=3.90), personnel (M=4.48), services (M=4.15) and physical set-up (M=4.07). These were perceived to be very good. Likewise, the overall perception of faculty revealed to be very good.

Moreover, it was emphasized in the study of Ekeri, (2016) that meeting the needs of the library users is the first step towards providing excellent library services.

Table 3.Students Perception of the Library When Taken According to Parameters

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Collection	378	3.72	.58919	Very Good
Personnel	378	3.88	.87365	Very Good
Services	378	3.77	.64138	Very Good
Physical-Set Up	378	3.92	.64817	Very Good

The students' perception of the library when grouped according to parameters collection (M=3.72), personnel (M=3.88), services (M=3.77) and physical set-up (M=3.92) revealed to be very good as reflected in table 3.

Moreover, the results of the study implied that the students' perception of the library in general was positive as it was revealed to be very good.

Results of the study was congruent to the results of the study of Surmieda (2012) that library services were perceived by clients as very good.

However, the study of Bem-bura, (2013) which revealed negative perception on the library services arise from lack of awareness of students on how to search for information materials. Another factor was the attitude of librarian and staff toward students which is not encouraging. Thus, it is necessary to improve their approach to library users.

Table 4. ANOVA Results of the Difference in the Perceptions of Users According to Parameters

	Mean	df	F	P value	Rank
Collection	3.76	106	1.037	.440	NS
Personnel	3.99	106	.857	.697	NS
Services	3.84	106	1.039	.438	NS
Physical-Set Up	3.96	106	.770	.811	NS

p-value .05

Results in Table 4 revealed that there was no significant differences in the perceptions of the users towards the different parameters as reflected by the p-value of .440 for collection, .697 for personnel, .438 for services and .811 for physical set up which is higher than .05.

These implies that, one area of the library may affect the overall performance of the library if not given equal priority and importance. Thus, it is necessary to have balance in the provision of users need to meet the facuty and students expectations.

Table 5. Pearsons r Results for Relationship Between Students and Faculty Perception of the Library

	r	R2	p-value	Remarks
Faculty Students	- 0.097	0.194	.322	NS

p-value .05

It was reflected in Table 5 that there was no significant relationship between faculty and the

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students' perception of the library with the p-value of .322.

Moreover, faculty and students perception towards collection, personnel, services and physical set-up of the library contributed 19% of the variation of the different categories. There might be other factors that contribute to the perceptions of the library users.

Conversely, the study of Dorado (2010) revealed that the perceived quality services of respondents according to library user group was found significant.

Findings

1. Generally, the users' perception of the library as a whole revealed to be very good specifically as to collection, personnel, services and physical set-up.
2. Faculty's perceptions of the library when grouped according to parameters such as collection, personnel, services and physical set-up was very good. Likewise, the overall perceptions of the faculty revealed to be very good.
3. The students' perception of the library when grouped according to parameters such as collection, personnel, services, and physical set-up revealed to be very good. Moreover, the overall perceptions of students were also very good.
4. There was no significant difference in the perceptions of users as to collection, .personnel, services and physical set up. Thus, the null hypothesis was not rejected.
5. There was no significant relationship between faculty and students perceptions of the library. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Conclusions

1. The very good perception of users in the library as to collection, personnel, services and physical set-up, can be attributed to how satisfied the users of the services being provided to them.
2. Faculty perceptions of the library in all areas do not vary. Provisions of services in different areas were equally perceived by faculty to be consistently very good.
3. As to the students, there was no variation in their perceptions to the different areas which

were all very good. This implies that both faculty and students have the same perceptions of the library.

4. The library in relation to parameters, collection, personnel, services and physical set-up were maintained, as it was found to have no difference in the perception of users in the said areas of concern. In line with the results, it can be concluded that all parameters are important service quality dimensions. Still, other factors might contribute to the perception of users except those parameter areas mentioned in the study.
5. It may be concluded that regardless of the category of users, it does not affect the perception of users towards library as it bears no significant relationship between faculty and students' perceptions.

Recommendations

1. Though the perception of users towards library was very good, it is necessary to continuously improved areas of collection, personnel, services, and physical set-up to make it excellent.
2. Other areas of the library such as the administration, linkages, and finance may also be assessed to identify other concerns that need to be improved.
3. A regular monitoring and evaluation of library service delivery may be conducted to monitor improvement in the different areas of the library and consistency in the implementation of evaluation.
4. The administration may strengthen their support to the library programs in the realization of its goal and objectives to better provide services to its academic users.
5. Further studies may be conducted to substantiate the results gathered in this study.

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