Expectations from academic libraries among students in an international university institute in Sri Lanka: a case study of American National College

Hasitha Koralage
Librarian
ANC Education, No.308-310 R.A.De Mel Mawatha, Colombo-03
library@ancedu.com

Abstract

The American National College (ANC Education Ltd.) was established in 2002 in Colombo offering transfer and degree completion programs from several universities in the USA and Australia. The ANC Vision and Mission respectively are "To be the first choice for tertiary education in Sri Lanka" and "Molding successful futures by delivering International quality education to develop knowledge professionals capable of creating and exploiting global market opportunities." The ANC library was set up to facilitate student learning and provided prescribed text books, reference materials and journals. An E-learning center was established in 2013. The purpose of this study was to identify the best practices carried out by the Library to satisfy user requirements and to explore the problems users face. The research instrument was a user survey administered throughout May 2015. The sample population was the undergraduate and postgraduate students of ANC Education. A total number of 137 questionnaires were distributed and 100 properly completed questionnaires were selected for data input and analysis. Descriptive statistical data was generated using MS Excel. A high level of overall satisfaction of 77% was recorded for existing, conventional academic library services and facilities. Users were the most dissatisfied (less than 50% satisfaction) with internet related services and digital library facilities. The results of the survey helped to identify clearly the library services and facilities that needed improvement in the future. The study offers, practical solutions to better cater to the expectations of users. The study provided vital information to justify requesting better digital and other facilities from the management. It also helps us to understand the information seeking behavior of postgraduate and undergraduate students in private university institutions offering international academic programs.

Keywords*: Academic Libraries, User Satisfaction, Undergraduates, Postgraduates*

1.0 Introduction

Key to the success of any academic program is the quality of its library and how it functions. Therefore, the library is called the 'heart' of any academic institution. The main function of an academic library is to support teaching, learning, research and other academic programs of its parent organization. Academic libraries are currently facing their greatest challenge because of the global digital revolution. Due to the availability of online public access catalogues, online full-text databases, and other digital resources, users can access the libraries' resources around the clock without stepping in to the library building. Furthermore, as Tennant (2006) stated, "Libraries are also no longer the sole gateway to information and knowledge they once were. As more information becomes freely available on the Internet, a librarian's gate keeping role is lessened for a significant portion of our users". Thus, in order to survive in this rapidly changing volatile environment, academic librarians must focus on retaining and growing their customer/ user base and put in mucheffort in to meeting the expectations of their users (Cullen, 2001). To meet these challenges, it is important to understand the customer (user) expectations and evaluate services offered to efficiently allocate resources for the future development of the library.

For decades academic librarians have increasingly recognized the importance of assessing their user expectations and library services. In the recent past the assessment has transformed academic libraries from a library-centric view which focuses on processes, functions, and services to a customer-centric view. Only the customers are aware of their needs and expectations and are capable of judging the quality of services offered. In this context, libraries have turned towards the customer/user surveys to determine the extent to which the library is or is not meeting the customer's expectations. The purpose of user surveys in terms of; providing detailed information about the user's opinion of the service; helping to clarify the librarian's concept of the service as well as his/her assumptions about the users' needs; indicating problems; and suggesting solutions. When properly designed and administered customer/user) surveys can provide both quantitative and qualitative data directly from the target population.

American National College in Colombo 03 was established in 2002. It provides international undergraduates and postgraduate education through its partnership with some of the leading universities worldwide such as Monash University, Australia, Northwood and Missouri Science and Technology University USA and University of West London, UK. The current enrolment is approximately 1000 students. The library of the college is located on the second floor of the administrative building at No.308-310, R.A De Mel Mawatha Colombo 03. It offers a rich collection of volumes of more than 10000 books, around ten titles of periodicals, collection of DVDs, several online journals and local newspapers.

2.0 Review of literature

An academic library plays a vital role in teaching and learning of an academic institution. Its aims are to collect, process, preserve and disseminate documents and information to serve the user community. It is a service oriented organization. Sohali et.al (2012) studied the use of library resources by the students of University of Kalyani, India. The authors found out that the guidance in the use of library resources and services was necessary to help students to meet their information needs. They also found that journals, textbooks and lecture notes were the most popular sources of information for the students. They suggested that the latest editions of textbooks and reference materials should be added to the library collection and users should be guided to the resources of the library. Ranganathan and Babu (2012) studied the awareness and use of library resources and services of Osmania University, Hyderabad, India. They studied the adequacy of library resources, opinions on e-resources or print sources, reasons of using e-resources and satisfaction in sources of information provision. Sowole (1995) mentioned that the librarians have to make the maximum effort to ensure that their library users get the best possible benefits from the services they render. Mahajan (2009) studied the information seeking behaviour of undergraduate and postgraduate students in Social Sciences and Humanities at the Punjab University, India. The findings reveal that users were more or less satisfied with the collection and services. He further suggested that library professionals must understand the information seeking behaviour of users to provide information effectively since methods and tools for information delivery continue to grow and change dramatically.

3.0 Statement of the Problem

Academic libraries are set up to provide access to information resources and services to meet the information needs of their clientele. If their clientele are not satisfied with the resources and services provided, the purpose of having the library is lost. The focus of this study was to find out whether the users i.e. undergraduate and postgraduate students of the ANC are satisfied with the resources and services provided by its library.

4.0 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study was to investigate the expectations from the ANC Library among the student population and satisfying their requirements. The objectives of the study were as follows.
- To determine how satisfied undergraduate and postgraduate students are with the current library resources and services.
- To identify the unmet needs of the undergraduate and postgraduate students for future improvements.
- To identify methods to satisfy all the needs of the academic library users.

5.0 Methodology

The survey research method was adopted for this assessment. The questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 137 students and 100 were properly completed. The study population consisted of the undergraduate international students of Monash University, Australia, John F. Kennedy University and Northwood University programs, USA and the postgraduate students of the University of West London. Simple random sampling among frequent library users was done to select the students sampled for the study. The sample was drawn from all four study program in an equal number of 25 students from each to give equal weight in order to get adequate information to understand the needs of students in all four programs. A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from the sample. The questionnaire consisted of mostly structured, closed ended questions and a few open ended questions. In order to check the clarity of the questionnaire, it was pretested by a pilot survey using a random sample of students. The questionnaire was redesigned to better address the objectives of the assessments based on the pilot survey result. The questionnaire included questions regarding basic information about the users, frequency of visits to the library, reasons for visits, whether they are members of the library, rating the library services and the importance of each of the named services, perception about the library staff, overall satisfaction about the library environment and the unmet needs they expected from the library. Sufficient space was provided for comments in each section. The questionnaire was distributed and collected in lecture halls. The collected data was analyzed and findings are presented below.

6.0 Results and Discussions

A total of hundred (100) properly filled questionnaires were received out of one hundred and thirty seven (137) giving an overall response rate of seventy two percent (72%). The results of the study revealed that ninety five percent (95%) of the survey respondents mentioned that they are members of the library and they use the library for learning and research purposes.

Table-1and Figure-1shows that the majority of respondents i.e. seventy nine percent (79%) of students visit the library daily or weekly. Only seven percent (7%) of students use the library less often than once a month. The study revealed that the library is heavily used by the undergraduate students.

Table-1: Frequency of visiting the library

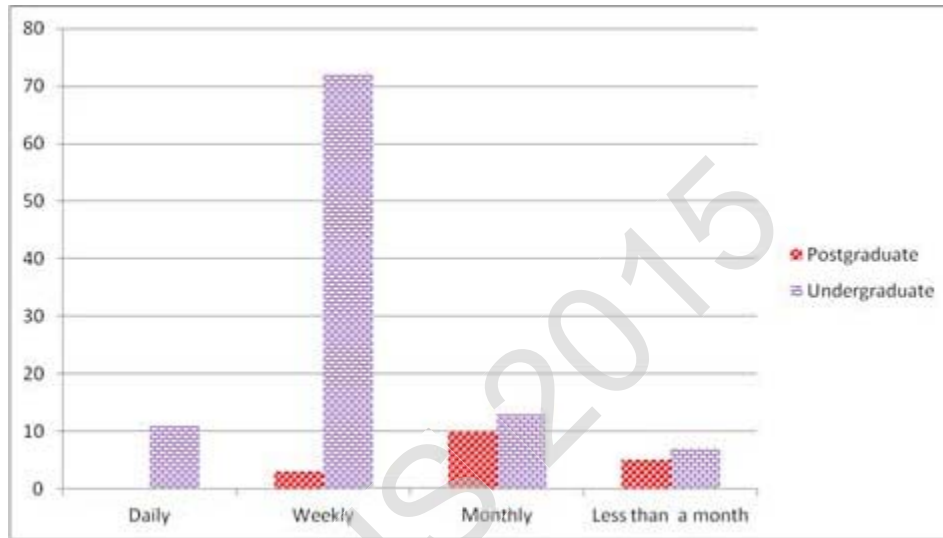| Frequency	Postgraduate	Undergraduate	Total%
Daily	0	11	(11)11%
Weekly	03	65	(68) 68%
Monthly	10	04	(14)14%
Less than once a Month	05	02	(07)7%

Figure- 1: Frequency of visiting the library

6.1 User satisfaction level with the library services

Further, the respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the customer services, about the collection, supply of course materials, online services (such as providing recommended websites and online catalogues), rules and regulations, electronic resources, internet/Wi-Fi access, physical atmosphere, hours of operations and the overall satisfaction about the library.

Table-2: User satisfaction level with the library services

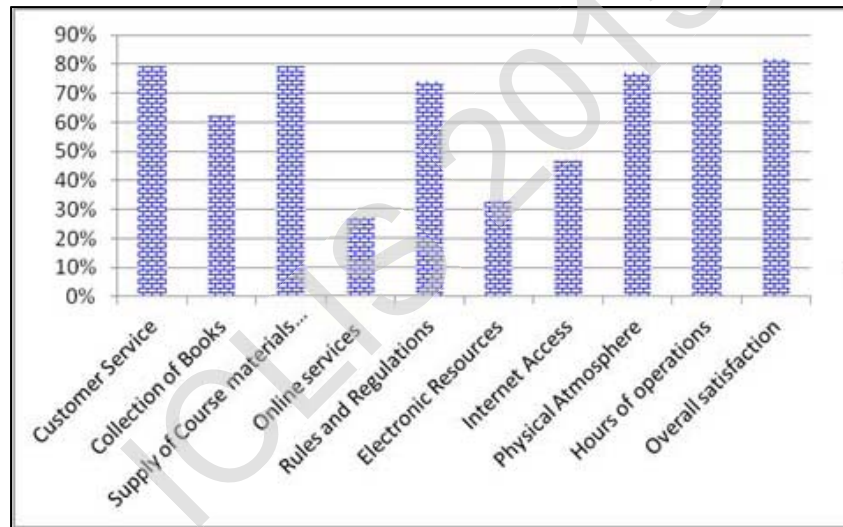| Category	User Satisfaction Level
Customer Service	79%
Collection of Books	62%
Supply of Course Materials (Textbooks)	79%
Online Services	27%
Rules and Regulations	74%
Electronic Resources	33%
Internet Access	47%
Physical Atmosphere	77%
Hours of Operations	80%
Overall Satisfaction	82%

Figure- 2: User satisfaction level with the library services

It is pleasing to see that the results of the study (Table-2 /Figure-2) indicated that the majority of users are satisfied with the customer services given by the library staff. According to the Figure-2 the respondents of the study pointed out that they were strongly dissatisfied with the online services, internet access and electronic resources in the library. The user satisfaction level was twenty seven percent (27%), forty seven percent (47%) and thirty percent (33%) respectively. Only sixty two percent (62%) of students were satisfied with the existing collection (books, DVDs, newspapers, magazines etc.). They pointed out that reading materials for postgraduate and undergraduate programs were insufficient. The majority of the respondents i.e. seventy nine percent (79%) were satisfied with the service of supplying course materials through the library. The

satisfaction levels for library rules and regulations was seventy four percent (74%), while the physical atmosphere of the library was seventy seven percent (77%) and the hours of operation was eighty percent (80%). However, the overall satisfaction of users towards the library was eighty two percent (82%).

6.2 Importance of library services

Respondents were asked to rate the relative importance of library services such as borrowing facility, reference service, study room, internet/Wi-Fi access, online services (such as online catalogue and library website), photocopy services, newspaper and magazines, as well as the overall importance of the library to them.

Table-3: Importance of Library Services

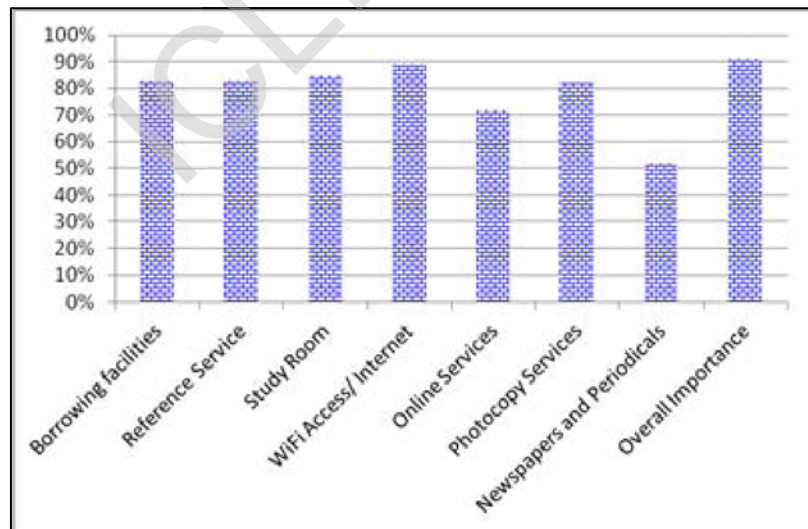| Category	Level of Importance %
Borrowing Facilities	83%
Reference Service	83%
Study Room	85%
Wi-Fi Access/ Internet	89%
Online Services	72%
Photocopy Services	82%
Newspapers and Periodicals	52%
Overall Importance of the library	91%

Figure- 3: Level importance of library services

According to Table-3 and Figure-3, the respondents express enthusiasm regarding the borrowing facility (83%), having a separate study room (85%), Internet access (Wi-Fi), online services such as (websites, online catalogues, electronic resources, research databases etc.) 72% and in-house photocopy service (82%). Only about half of the respondents expressed their enthusiasm towards the newspapers and periodicals. However, overall, 91% of the students responded that these library facilities were vitally important for them.

7.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has presented information on the user satisfaction toward the services provided by the library, its collection, infrastructure, facilities etc. The study found that users of the ANC library were satisfied with the library services. However, there is room for improvement as some respondents expressed their dissatisfaction with some library services and facilities in the user survey. Only sixty two percent (62%) of respondents believed that the existing collection is sufficient. This is rather low and the management should pay attention to solve the issue by increasing the number of copies provided of each updated prescribed and recommended book. The study revealed that the existing electronic resource and online services and internet access in the library were also inadequate. Hence, immediate steps should be taken to improve these resources that are relevant to study programmes offered by their partner universities.

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