

## **Library Styling and Its Effects on Library Users Information Seeking Behaviour**

ADELAJA, Israel Adetayo - israel4excellence@gmail.com  
AJOKOTOLA, Busola - ajokotolafeyi6288@gmail.com  
BAKARE, Olubunmi - bafem@yahoo.com

### **Abstract**

Previous works on library have provided insights into how library users could maximally benefit from library for academic purposes; however, from their scholarly investigations, it was discovered that many library users did not prefer to use library for academic purposes in the Contemporary age nor for any other reason(s) thereby the reading culture deteriorates on daily basis in Nigeria. Little or no scholarly investigation has examined reasons for library users' feeling about library from the perspective of Library Styles and its Effect on Library Users Information Seeking Behaviour. Therefore, the present study intends to explore library style and its effects on library users' information seeking behaviours. Specifically, the study also intends to find out what fascinates and motivates library users to visit library and as well cater for library users' other needs apart from academics. The study employed quantitative approach and twenty (20) respondents were purposively selected from Southwest and the Southeast geopolitical zones of Nigeria and they served as population for the study. The questionnaire for the study has two parts and simple percentages were used to calculate and analyse respondents' responses through SurveyMonkey version 2012. None of the respondents has less than university degree experience. Kuhlthaus 1991 model served as theoretical frameworks for the study. Findings revealed that 60% of the respondents agreed that the physical appearance of library encourages library users to visit library. The study recommended that the libraries should have good physical structure that fascinate and encourage library users to maximise the opportunities that library has potency to provide.

**Keywords:** Library Style, Information Management

### **Introduction**

The way of life of a nation is influenced by the percentage of its citizen who are literate. No doubt, reading stimulates imagination, encourage quick learning and expands horizon. Library is essential to learning and creative/attractive styles/designs are now a central consideration in creating an effective and innovative learning environment.

Today's library is now repositioning themselves from the traditional book hub to an energetic modern and innovative learning environment for sustainable development and global

competitiveness. It is important to state that Users of today's library no longer need a library merely for access, instead they need an area that encourages collaborative learning and permits for co-construction of ideas and innovations from a range of sources. Libraries ought to become a learning hub for the varsity community that will encourage lecturers and students to collaborate, communicate and share. The libraries of the twenty first century should be repositioned to offer a hospitable and galvanizing setting that births exploration, creation and collaboration between users, information professionals and a broader community.

Style of a library starting from the design of the building, various fascinating sections of the library, painting, lighting, technology, recreation etc. no doubt affects the information seeking behaviour of users. This is because it has been said that first appearance lasts longer. So how a library appears determines the information seeking behaviour of the user's community of such library. This study intends to explore the importance of library style that facilitates information seeking behaviour of each library user.

### **Research Question**

The following questions shall guide the study:

- i. Does library style encourage information seekers to visit the library?
- ii. Does library style increase library user's appetite in seeking for information?

### **Literature Review**

Today's library is moving from resource centric to user centric. Library space has evolved into a brand new style that contributes to the informal learning setting our information seekers request in our building. Bennett (2003) **refers to this current phase of library style as "learner centered"**.

Our users' desires have become a determining factor in library space planning and designing. Developing such an interactive space needs understanding how today's information seekers learn with the objective of facilitating their learning within the space they opt for, invent and evaluate

information in addition to the real and virtual ambience within which they do their research work in order to serve them effectively and with efficiency. Innovative and creative libraries is about investing in people, changing their perceptions about libraries and its purpose, reinventing the library interior designs and its layout. Scholars widely discuss the library as a place for social and collaborative learning. Libraries therefore, should be repositioned to offer spaces that inspire students to learn, unlearn and relearn from one another in addition to learning from our collections. In this relaxed atmosphere, open discussions and collaborative learning are inspired and encouraged.

Learning targeted researches identifies learning as a social expertise wherever people will come together and have interaction or dialogue (Oblinger, 2004). The library has reinvented into a space, where active learning happens which facilitates learners' collaboration with one another and with colleagues in a setting, outside the classroom (i.e. learning outside the classroom. LOTC) (Hunley & Schaller, 2009).

Hunley and Schaller (2009) studied the connection between learning space, academic programmes and learning. The study reveals that learning areas or spaces can motivate or negatively affect users' information seeking behavior. The library can be a setting to be with other information seekers in a learning/cultural setting (Demas, 2005).

Such spaces attract users providing them the chance to debate their learning and develop a sense of fulfilment. Libraries have additionally created their spaces more leisurely so as to boost their users' social learning. (Matthews et al., 2011) posited that learners are more involved in their learning areas wherever social learning is inspired.

The necessity of evaluating clientele's information seeking behavior as a result of smart library styles provides crucial insight regarding how our users understand the space in their learning.

This research aims to contribute to the ongoing discussion of library style and its effect on user's information seeking behaviour.

## **Why Quality Library Style/Design**

McDonald (2003) posited that smart library space encompasses a variety of vital qualities and that, ideally, these new styles ought to be:

- **Functional:** Recent style trends emphasize a people-centered approach to designing, for instance, Wu (2003) considers it as those who style (or design) libraries, people that deliver services and other people who use them. Above all, the user ought to be our focus. Dowlin (1999) affirms that the beauty of libraries is in connecting minds and fascinating library buildings within the twenty first century for real functionality to take place. For well-arranged library to be functional and dynamic, it should have a positive impact on user's information seeking behavior.
- **Adaptable:** Dynamic style and space, the utilization of which might simply be modified and adaptable to meet the educational, recreational, cultural and other information needs of different groups of information seekers.
- **Accessible:** The library is the heart as well as the academic focus of any institution and plays a robust educational and social role within the learning, teaching and research processes within the establishment. The library as a repository and fountain of information should be as accessible as possible, encouraging and inviting information seekers to make full use of the services it renders. It should cater for the ever increasing different kinds of more and harder to satisfy users and their numerous learning and research styles, and for ancient and electronic modes of delivery. Access ought to be as direct and non-ambiguous as possible with a self-reliant layout facilitating freelance study.
- **Varied:** New library styles ought to make provision for a wide range of study environments to satisfy the growing diversity of our users and their completely different styles of learning and discovery. Users ought to be inspired to learn at their own pace and in their own time, with provision not just for quiet study and freelance learning, but also, more and more, for group work

and interactive learning. Indeed, the availability of social and collaborative spaces within which users will interact with one another is a very important trend.

The wide range of reader's places varies from single person to multi-person tables of varied shapes, casual seating, classrooms and cluster study facilities. Some readers like a bubbling or noisy social learning setting; others like a quiet study environment with smart acoustic and visual privacy and this may be achieved to completely different degrees with numerous furnishings styles, together with table dividers, bookstands, mesh screens and carrels. In some cases interiors are becoming more like extension of the sitting room, providing the emotional area for social interaction among the educational community.

- **Interactive:** there is need for well-organized area that promotes and facilitates contact between users and services. We must ensure that there is balance between the space for collections, services, readers and information technology. The well-arranged library not solely makes optimum use of the area or space available, however additionally promotes collaboration between individuals and encourages the utilization of its services. The circulation desk, reference points, cluster study areas and information skills rooms are all key areas of interaction in trendy libraries.

- **Conducive:** Today's library should be home-away-from-home as that will motivate and encourage users. The library as the academic heart of the institution ought to portray a sense of quality, worth and place. The vicinity should be convenient for academic work and reflection and should encourage and motivate its users. Clienteles, several of whom study for long periods and in progressive numbers, ought to feel relaxed and secure. Innovative design, fascinating creativities and varied internal areas all contribute to the atmosphere of the environment. This can as well be enhanced by beautiful paintings, sculptures, decorative glass, recreational gardens and different cultural designs.

- **Environmentally suitable:** Appropriate environmental conditions are necessary, not just for the convenience of information seekers, but also for the effective and efficient running of computers and also the conservation of library resources. Normally, human, biological, chemical

and environmental factors ought to be controlled. Cross ventilation, currently popular in new buildings, provides an inexpensive, fantastic and a user-friendly environment.

- **Safe and secure:** Every library infrastructure comes with safety issues connected to the library building, information seekers, resources, instruments and information (Quinsee & McDonald, 1991). The library style should adjust to current health and safety regulations and specific attention ought to be paid to the engineering science design of workstations, to securing information technology instruments, and to operation throughout non-standard operating hours. Sadly, smart security measures will typically conflict with convenience, aesthetics and even security.

- **Appropriate for information technology:** 21<sup>st</sup> century library designs should permit the library and its clientele to learn absolutely from speedy advances in Information Communication Technology (ICT). So, we should always be designing buildings to replicate tomorrow's technologies instead of today's (JISC, 2006) and to exceed the yearnings of the web or internet generation (Fox, 1999). In planning and designing libraries for efficient and web-based learning, we must acknowledge the unavoidable difficulties that comes with new developments in mobile, connected, visual and collaborative as well as supportive learning (JISC, 2006).

- **The 'wow' factor:** There should be provision of engaging spaces that captivates the minds and eyes of information seekers and the vision and mission of the institution. It implies that the university library design should cater for different categories of users. Information seekers should enter the library and express the 'wow' feelings. Skilled architects and planners can strike a balance between these qualities to design innovative buildings with attractive architectural layouts and design fascinating areas that captivates the minds of information seekers and also fulfil the vision and mission of the university.

Conclusively, today's users have great expectations, they expect customization, and are technology veterans that utilize new communication modes therefore, to accommodate these numerous and diversifying desires, library space must be versatile.

Buildings should be ready to demonstrate agility and to accommodate each of the social and individual learning from undergraduate to postgraduate degree level, while incorporating the technologies that transform how learning takes place.

Today's library buildings should still offer the 'place' where individuals can come together to undertake variety of vital activities. Libraries should be styled to see increasing numbers of users who want to study or review, learn, reflect, collaborate and exchange ideas. With these innovations, information seekers will visit the library more often, consult the resources, retrieve information and use the information technology equipment available. They will request the help and support of trained information professionals and make great use of the complete range of services available.

From the review of the prevailing literature, it's evident that the libraries of the information age should adjust to library style that enhances motivation to go to libraries and create use of libraries for knowledge improvement.

## **Methodology**

The research was quantitative. Twenty (20) respondents were purposively selected from Southwest and the Southeast geopolitical zones of Nigeria and they served as population for the study. The respondents are first degree, Master's, doctoral students and lecturers in Nigerian universities. The test instrument has ten items and they were divided into two parts. Part one has nine (9) items that focused on the situations of their libraries in terms of physical structure, aesthetics, how frequently they visit library in order to infer from their responses factors that determine respondents' information seeking behaviour. Each item has three (4) options such as *Yes, No, I don't think* and *I don't know*. Part two has one item that was open-ended question in order identify respondents' expectations each time they visit library. The respondents' responses were collected, collated and statistically analyzed using SurveyMonkey version 2012. Kuhlthaus 1991 Information Search Process model served as theoretical framework for the study. Kuhlthau's model is an analytical model suggesting a relationship between process stages and feelings, thoughts and actions. The model was adopted as the theoretical framework for this

research because information seeking behavior of users is determined by first the feelings (which is affective), thoughts (which is cognitive) and actions (which is physical).

Every user needs a motivational factor to use a source of information or the information itself. In other words, first impression they say last longer. If the library lacks good design that can attract users to the library, it would have negative effect on their feelings about the library as well as their information seeking behavior.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

Library is an institution which holds books and or other forms of media for use by the public or qualified people often lending them out, as well as providing various others services for its users. However, from the definition of library, it showed that library is indispensable to knowledge development of any individual. Despite the significance of library, the study revealed that only 37.50% of the respondents who are first degree, second degree, doctoral students and lecturers in Southwest and Southeast of Nigeria regularly visit library.

### **Does library style encourage information seekers to visit the library?**

**Table 1: Do you visit library regularly**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>
YES	40%
NO	60%

Table 1 showed that only 40% of the respondents often visit library. The respondents are believed to be academicians whose focus should be on research for knowledge development and publications for others to read and understand certain things. If 60% as revealed (**Table 5.1.1**) said that they rarely visited library, it might project that many students in Nigerian higher institutions rarely use libraries. Their failure to use library would make them to miss opportunities that library offer every library user. In addition to that, it showed that the reading culture must have been affected and it failure to address and redress the situation might adversely

affect many students career progression due to low performances. Institutions might need to encourage students because several factors might have been responsible for many library users refusing to use library for their benefits. For instance, it could be that the libraries are not in good shape for the library users, or libraries do not cater for their comprehensive needs.

Kuhlthau's 1991 model explains that physical component of library has tendency to affect how library users will perceive libraries. The model identifies that the physical beauty of libraries creates feelings that are affective, produce thought and actions that either motivate library users to visit.

Responses in Table 5.1.2 (below) provided insights into why the respondents rarely visit library. It is not sufficient to stock library with books and other materials that library users need, it is important that the library should have good physical structure that encourage and motivate library users to visit. For instance, library users who intended to visit library for sightseeing if well-built might be encouraged to create interest visiting library for reading, doing assignment and for other reasons.

**Table 2: Does the physical appearance of library encourage you to visit library?**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>
YES	60%
NO	35%
I DON'T THINK	5%

Table 2 revealed that 60% of the respondents are motivated to visit library because of the physical appearance and styling. It then means that if the libraries are not well-built and designed 60% of every student who supposed to use library because of their academics and other different purposes will not and it will affect their academic performances.

The effect might not be limited to their academic performances at the moment, but in future as well. If such students who are not academically sound during their academics become teachers,

doctors, pilots or politicians, what will become of Nigeria as a country; that includes why every profession must render their duties to contribute towards nation-building.

From the analysis, only 35% which was 50% of those who categorically identified that the physical structure of library determines their frequent visitations mentioned that the appearance of library does not determine their visitation to library. The percentage was below average and it is possible that the respondents who belonged to this category might not often visit library.

It is possible that the 60% who emphasized on the need to have good physical library may have not been visiting library because of the way their libraries have been. Similarly, it might have affected their academics. Also, it is possible to imagine that such libraries with poor physical structures may not have sufficient library equipment that will cater for library users.

Furthermore, 85% and 15% of the respondents accepted that their schools' libraries were well built and constructed (**Table 3**). **Table 3** showed that the respondent's responses in **Table 2** were corroborated. For instance, if 85% of the respondents like the way their schools' libraries were built and 60% agreed that the way their school libraries look like determine their frequent or rare use of libraries, it connotes that students prefer seeing libraries that are well-built in physical structure.

It implies that the feelings (which are affective), thoughts (which is cognitive) and actions (which is physical) can be dependent on physical appearance of libraries.

**Table 3: I like the way my school library was constructed and built**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>
YES	85%
NO	15%

**Table 3** showed that many libraries in Southwest and the Southeast of Nigeria have good physical structure that motivated library user's patronage. However, this is expected to be replicated in every higher institution in order to motivate library users to visit library. It is important to mention, that despite the fact that respondents' libraries have good physical

structure, yet only 30% regularly visit libraries. There is tendency for the percentage of those that prefer going to library to drop if library users are no longer satisfied about how library cater for their needs. It then implies that the library officers must continue to serve library users as expected.

Libraries in the contemporary period must have technology apparatus in order to cater for the needs of library users of the 21st century. Libraries that operate as traditional and analogue in the post-Covid era will not in any way assist the library users, because the challenges that library users encountered in the post-covid differed from before the covid-19.

#### **Does library style increase library user's appetite in seeking for information?**

**Table 4: Does your school library have a technology rich area where you carry out online research, media production and app development?**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>
YES	65%
NO	25%
I DON'T THINK	10%

**Table 4** showed that 25% of the respondents complained about the technological gadgets that their school libraries have. Even those that have, do they allow their library users to explore the technologies that were provided for the library? Other possible challenges may include the fact that the library officers may not be able to handle the technologies in the libraries.

Libraries in the post-covid should provide online opportunities for the library users harnessing information through internet remotely. It implies that the libraries that are not digitized are not fit for use in the contemporary period.

One of the benefits of digitized libraries is the ability to access library information and material through internet. Notwithstanding, the findings also revealed that 10% of the respondents were not aware that their academic libraries have technology that can enhance their academics. That

is, officers in academic libraries may need to re-orientate library users in the post-Covid era in order for the library users to identify how libraries can be used in post-Covid. Otherwise, there is tendency for library users refusing to use libraries since post-Covid era negate crowd and it may adversely affect their academics.

**Table 5** (below) intended to find out if libraries have place(s) for relaxation and creativity where library users can make use of after reading. 40% of the respondents said yes, but further may intend to inquire from the respondents if they have never used the place for its purposes. Reasons may not be farfetched as library users may not be aware of how it could be used.

**Table 5: My school library has recreational centre for relaxation and creativity**

Answer Choices	Responses
YES	40%
NO	50%
I DON'T THINK	5%
I DON'T KNOW	5%

From the **Table 5**, results revealed that 50% of the respondents have not been seeing any place for relaxation in their libraries. When libraries have spaces for relaxation, for example, library users will be encouraged to visit libraries and it will increase their appetite for information seeking. This inability might have been hindering many library users from using library for different reasons. After reading, there ought to be a place where library users can cool their heads and ponder on what has been read. The results as well revealed that 5% of the respondents did not know or think that such place existed in libraries. **Table 6** (below) was similar to **Table 5**.

**Table 6: My school library has a place for end-to-end learning for collaboration and knowledge sharing**

Answer Choices	Responses
YES	40%
NO	35%

I DON'T THINK	15%
I DON'T KNOW	10%

By inference, **Table 5** and **Table 6** have a lot of roles to contribute towards the library users. For instance, the open-ended question revealed that internet should be made available in the libraries. 95% of the respondents who attempted the open-ended emphasized on the need to have internet in the libraries. Responses in **Table 6** are germane and crucial as they determine productivity of the library users in the information age. It is not sufficient to display books on the bookshelves in the information age; importantly, there is need for library design that will cater for collaboration among library users in order to translate whatever they have read into reality. No wonder many students finished their academic programmes with little or no experience of how whatever they have studied in the schools can be made use of outside the school setting. If there are platforms for collaboration with others, library users would have helped one another. In addition to that, library users who rarely visit libraries would have had reasons to visit and make use of libraries.

Apart from the availability on technologies in the libraries which will motivate libraries users and contribute to their academics; libraries in the post-COVID should have what fascinate library users. Human sense of seeing appeals to whatever that is good looking. When university libraries as well have enough space and good paintings, there is possibility for such features to increase library users' information seeking behaviour and they will use the libraries for its purposes.

**Table 7: Does your library space, paintings and designs have effects on your information seeking behavior?**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>
YES	55%
NO	40%
I DON'T THINK	5%

For instance, 40% of the respondents attested that the libraries do not have space, paintings and designs that could stimulate their interests for seeking information and to visit the library for patronage. Library officers should not demonstrate nonchalant attitude towards ensuring that library users visit libraries regularly. The library officers could as well have suggestion box and once in a while distribute feedback forms that can suggest what the library users expected to see in order to increase their information seeking behaviour and make them visit libraries frequently and maximally. Furthermore, responses among the respondents on **Table 7** (below) showed that the libraries in Nigeria are digitized except that library officers may need to evaluate activities of libraries that have been digitized.

**Table 7: Is your school library digitised?**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>
YES	65%
NO	15%
I DON'T THINK	10%
I DON'T KNOW	10%

**Table 7** showed that 65% of the respondents' libraries are digitized but 35% of the libraries are yet to be digitized. Every library in Nigeria ought to have been digitized when libraries in the developed world have advanced and made their libraries users friendly through digital platforms.

It implies that libraries in Nigeria are experiencing under-development and it would definitely affect information seeking behavior of today's users as well as library officer's responsibilities that cater for the welfare of every library user.

**Table 8: Are your library officers friendly in their approach to library users?**

<b>Answer Choices</b>	<b>Responses</b>
YES	65%
NO	30%

I DON'T THINK	5%
---------------	----

**Table 8** supports that feelings, thoughts and actions of library users as well their information seeking behaviour might be affected by expression of library officers towards the library users (Kuhlthau 1991). It implies that library officers must be friendly in their approach. If librarians or information professionals are hostile it will have a negative effect on the information seeking behavior of library users.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Conclusively, today's users have great expectations, they expect customization, and are technology veterans that utilize new communication modes therefore, to accommodate these numerous and diversifying desires, library space must be versatile. Buildings should be ready to demonstrate agility and to accommodate each of the social and individual learning from undergraduate to postgraduate degree level, while incorporating the technologies that transform how learning takes place.

Today's library buildings should still offer the 'place' where individuals can come together to undertake variety of vital activities.

Libraries should be styled to see increasing numbers of users who want to study or review, learn, reflect, collaborate and exchange ideas.

The library as a place has become a key issue in modern librarianship as the library attempts to attract more users by being more than a collection of information resources but also a place where users can relax and study in peace and comfort.

1. Today's libraries should be repositioned from the traditional book hub to an energetic modern and innovative learning environment for sustainable development and global competitiveness.
2. Librarians should be involved in the architectural design of the library building right from the scratch.

3. Library users should also be consulted to know their information needs so that the library can be designed to meet their varying needs.

## References

- Bennett, S. (2009). Libraries and learning: A history of paradigm change. *Portal: Libraries and the Academy*, 9, 181–197 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/pla.0.0049>)
- Demas, S. (2005). *From the ashes of Alexandria: What's happening in the college library? Library as place: Rethinking roles, rethinking space*. Washington, DC: Council on Library and Information Resources
- Dowlin, K.E. (1999). San Francisco public library. In: *Intelligent library buildings*. Marie Françoise Bisbrouck and M. Chauveinc (eds). *Proceedings of the 10th seminar of the IFLA Section on Library Buildings and Equipment*, The Hague, Netherlands, August, 1997. München : Saur, pp. 117-209.
- Fox, B.-L. (1999) Structural ergonomics. *Library Journal* 124, 20, 57-69.
- Hunley, S., & Schaller, M. (2009). Assessment the key to creating spaces that promote learning. *Educause Review*, 44, 26–35 (<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERM0923.pdf>)
- JISC - Joint Information Systems Committee (2006). *Designing Spaces for Effective Learning. A Guide to 21st century learning space design*. London: JISC. [http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded\\_documents/JISClearningspaces.pdf](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/uploaded_documents/JISClearningspaces.pdf)
- McDonald, A.C. (2003). Creating good learning space. In: *Libraries with oomph: PFI for higher education libraries*. Papers delivered at a Seminar. London: Nabarro Nathanson, pp 4-8.
- Matthews, K. E., Andrews, V., & Adams, P. (2011). Social learning spaces and student engagement. *Higher Education Research and Development*, 30, 105–120 (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2010.512629>)
- Oblinger, D. (2004). Leading the transition from classrooms to learning spaces. An NLI (National Learning Infrastructure Initiative) white paper (<http://net.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/NLI0447.pdf>)
- Quinsee, A.C. and A. C. McDonald (eds) (1991). *Security in academic and research libraries*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Newcastle University Library.
- Wu, J. (2003). *New library buildings of the world*. 2nd ed., Shanghai: Shanghai Scientific & Technological Literature Publishing House.