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## THE ROLE AND BENEFITS OF LIBRARY ORIENTATION PROGRAMMES IN CHUKWUEMEKA ODUMEGWU OJUKWU UNIVERSITY, ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

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*This study explores the role and benefits of Library Orientation (LO) programmes at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) in Anambra State. As a key initiative in academic libraries, Library Orientation is designed to educate, enlighten, guide and assist users in effectively identifying, understanding and utilizing library resources and services. Library orientation has been used for peace building, unity and community engagement because it is a form of awareness and familiarization. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate the role and benefits of library orientation programmes through three objectives and corresponding research questions. The study employed a survey research design, focusing on a population of 3,000 registered students from the university's library, and involved a sample of 300 students selected for participation. However, only 60 students were available on the day the survey was conducted. Data collection was carried out using a self-made questionnaire with three sections, distributed among the students to ensure broad representation. Analysis of the data was performed using frequency and percentages. The results revealed that library orientation is primarily offered only to first-year students with class room instruction predominantly used. The result reveals certain challenges facing the programme such as lack of funds and adequate instructional materials. Based on these findings, the study recommends that the COOU library should be adequately funded to utilize interactive tools and online platforms to make orientation sessions more engaging and comprehensive thereby helping students become more familiar with the library resources and services.*

**Keywords:** Library orientation, Academic library, Library users, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University

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### Introduction

Libraries have a crucial role in helping new students from diverse backgrounds integrate effectively into their first year at university. The orientation and information literacy programs offered by libraries are especially valuable in assisting students as they acclimate to life and study in a new country. However, the beginning of the academic year, often referred to as orientation season, is an exceptionally busy period for library staff. As a result, library tours can be rushed, and introductory classes may focus on general information skills and referencing practices that may not align with the specific needs of the students' courses. This approach can be confusing and even alienating for new students navigating unfamiliar academic and cultural terrain (Witt, Kutner, & Cooper, 2015). The library orientation session serves as a crucial marketing tool, offering library staff their first chance to engage with new clients.

It is obvious that the primary role of a library within an academic institution is to support the academic and research needs of its users, including students, lecturers and researchers (Nkamnebe, Udem, & Nkamnebe, 2014). Hence, in order to improve the services provided, it is essential for the university library to ensure that information resources and services are readily available and easily accessible to its patrons (Daramola, 2016). University libraries can be large and complex, with various sections, rooms and resources. Therefore, orientation helps users understand the structure of the library and locate materials and services efficiently. Although, often, library orientation seems to be problematic due to overwhelming information or lack of engagement by librarians as observed by Witt, Kutner, & Cooper (2015), but apparently orientation introduces users to the library's policies, such as borrowing rules, fines, and acceptable use of resources. This helps avoid confusion and ensures compliance.

Generally, academic library serves a diverse range of users, including students, both academic and non-academic staff, and researchers who may be unfamiliar with how to utilize library materials effectively (Zepke, 2013). Without proper guidance, accessing, identifying, or retrieving information within the library can be challenging, hindering learning, teaching, or research activities (Mathews, 2013). Academic library orientation plays a critical role in helping these users understand the library's operations and make the most of its services, facilitating their adaptation to the library system within the university.

As posited by Suleiman (2012) and Madukoma et al. (2013), academic libraries in developing nations have implemented various methods to instruct both new and existing users on the effective use of library resources. These methods typically begin with an orientation session for students, followed by a guided library tour, the provision of a library guide, and conclude with classroom instruction. Given the rapid advancements in information provision and modern technologies in academic libraries, the impact of these procedures on students is significant. Library orientation and instruction usually occur at the start of each academic year, targeting newly admitted students (Yarbro, Arfstrom, McKnight, & McKnight, 2014). Although these orientations include comprehensive activities designed to familiarize students with library services and resources, the effectiveness of these methods remains unclear.

Ideally, one can discuss library orientation, also known as user orientation, as a method for acclimating new library users to the library environment. This process aims to provide users with a comprehensive understanding of the library and the range of services it offers. According to Namugera (2017), library orientation educates users on the general use of library resources, helping them become familiar with the library's

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operations. The orientation and instruction programs in academic libraries are designed to help users fully benefit from the library's resources, materials, and services, while also fostering a sense of belonging and building trust with library staff. Additionally, these programs equip users with essential skills for locating information, thereby enhancing their confidence and independence (Namugera, 2017).

However, there are various methods of library orientation, including lectures by librarians, library tours, orientation handbooks, and video documentaries on library services. Each of these methods will be discussed in detail later in this conference paper. The primary purpose of library orientation is to emphasize the value of library resources, provide guidance on their use, and instruct users on how to secure library materials to prevent loss. This conference paper aims to address the importance of library orientation in the context of 21st-century education, highlighting how effective orientation can enhance users' engagement with library resources and contribute to their academic success.

To fulfill the vital role of informing, educating, entertaining, and preserving cultural heritage, libraries and information centers must identify, select, acquire, organize, and provide access to information resources and services for all individuals, regardless of religion, race, social status, political views, age, or gender. This responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of both public and academic libraries. Omode and Omode (2015) emphasized that addressing and resolving the unique challenges faced by a nation's educational system is crucial. In line with this, Nigeria's educational institutions, including libraries, are tasked with helping the country address pressing security issues that threaten national unity. This paper aims to explore how libraries contribute to orientation programs that promote peace, unity, and security by leveraging their essential role in disseminating information and offering community services.

**Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To assess the impact of library orientation on new users at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library (COOU)
2. To identify the types of library orientation programmes at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library (COOU).
3. To find out the challenges hindering effective library orientation at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library (COOU).

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

4. What is the impact of library orientation on new users at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library (COOU)?
5. What are the types of library orientation programmes at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library (COOU)?
6. What are the challenges hindering effective library orientation at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Library (COOU)?

**Literature Review****The Concept of Library Orientation and Its Benefits**

Several scholars have highlighted the importance of library orientation programs within academic institutions. Evidence suggests that students who participate in these programs tend to produce higher quality academic research. However, as Hindagolla (2012) notes, despite the extensive range of services and facilities offered by libraries, many students remain unaware of these resources due to the limited scope of orientation programs. Students often express dissatisfaction with existing orientation initiatives due to factors such as poorly timed sessions, insufficient coverage of electronic resources, inadequate focus on various study areas, overcrowded groups, lack of detailed program information, and the brief duration of the programs.

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The primary aim of library orientation is to familiarize users with the general techniques for utilizing the library and its services. This focus can be expanded to include an introduction to the layout and facilities of the specific library. According to Ibiodi (2005), this effort is part of a broader initiative in universities known as information literacy training, which encompasses library user education. Ibiodi further notes that such training may involve library guidelines, organized programs, one-on-one assistance (through reference services), and the use of instructional manuals. Orientation provides students with the opportunity to explore the library's various departments, often through guided tours. Participants receive handouts and leaflets that highlight essential materials, key aspects of the introductory lecture on library use, and brief but comprehensive demonstrations on locating and retrieving important resources (Onwuchekwa, 2019).

Library orientation is an essential program typically conducted by academic librarians. It aims at increasing users' awareness of the library and the range of services it offers. According to Namugera (2017), it provides education on the general use of library resources. The purpose of academic library orientation programs is to help users fully benefit from the library's resources, materials, and services while fostering a comfortable, familiar atmosphere and building trust with the library staff. In addition, it equips users with essential skills for locating information, which in turn enhances their confidence and independence (Namugera, 2017).

Goldman (2016) observed that newly admitted students who participate in library orientation are more likely to seek research assistance for their course papers, assignments, projects, and presentations. The primary goals of library orientation are to familiarize students with library services and resources and to educate them on how to effectively utilize these resources. The orientation

usually takes place within the library buildings, where students are organized by department to manage group sizes effectively. The program provides new students with information about library activities, services, programs, resources, opening hours, contact details, and rules and regulations. Also, during the orientation sessions, students are encouraged to ask questions about any aspects of library activities they do not fully understand, and librarians provide comprehensive answers to address their concerns.

### **The Role of Library Orientation in Promoting Peace and Unity**

University libraries play a pivotal role in fostering peace and unity in a diverse nation like Nigeria by advancing information literacy and critical thinking skills among students and lecturers. These libraries serve as educational hubs where individuals from various ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds come together. Through targeted library instruction programs, such as research workshops and information literacy courses, students learn how to critically assess sources, understand different viewpoints, and engage in respectful discourse (Rowe, *et al* 2021). This foundation not only combats misinformation but also cultivates an environment of mutual respect and understanding, which is crucial for maintaining social harmony in a pluralistic society.

Soltani and Nikou (2020) while emphasizing the value academic library services noted that the libraries provide equitable access to resources that support academic and personal development. In Nigeria's context, where disparities in educational resources can exist, libraries act as equalizers by offering all students access to a vast array of scholarly materials and learning tools. Library instruction ensures that students from various regions and backgrounds can effectively utilize these resources, bridging gaps in educational opportunity

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(O'Malley and Delwiche, 2012). Thus, by promoting inclusive access to knowledge, libraries help reduce regional and ethnic divides, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose among students and faculty.

On the other hand, Bangani and Dube (2023) examine how university libraries often engage in community outreach and civic education as part of user orientation in order to deal with community problems. This further contributes to peace building efforts within an identified community. Through public lectures, community programs, and collaborative initiatives, these libraries extend their impact beyond the campus, promoting civic engagement and social responsibility (Shawa, 2020). In Nigeria, where political and social tensions can be significant, library orientation through effective instruction helps students understand their roles as active citizens and encourages them to participate in constructive dialogues and community-building activities. Therefore, by empowering students with knowledge and fostering an environment of engagement and collaboration, university libraries play a crucial role in promoting national unity and social cohesion.

**Effect of Library Orientation on Library Users**

The implementation of library orientation programs in higher education institutions, both historically and currently, has had a positive impact on newly admitted students, particularly at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) in Nigeria. These programs help students learn how to effectively use the library's resources at the appropriate times. According to Busayo (2013), Nigerian higher education students are increasingly being encouraged to explore library and information services in various ways, enabling them to feel more comfortable, confident, and capable in accessing library resources.

Suleiman (2012) and Madukoma (2013) noted that academic libraries in Nigeria and other developing countries have developed various methods for orienting new and existing users. These methods include library orientations, classroom teaching, instruction, guided library tours, and library guides. Manuwa, Agboola, and Aduku (2018) highlight the importance of these methods in light of the trends and advancements in information provision and the adoption of modern technologies in academic libraries. Current library orientation methods have been found to encourage users to become more self-reliant in searching for information resources within the library. Also, many students who participated in library orientation programs have become more familiar with the reference sections of libraries, an area that often poses challenges to new users. The positive effects of library orientation on library users include:

1. **Increased Self-Independence:** Users become more self-reliant in searching for and utilizing information resources within the library.
2. **Enhanced Academic Performance:** Library orientation can contribute to improved academic performance by helping students effectively use library resources for their studies.
3. **Timely Borrowing and Returning:** Students are more likely to borrow and return library materials on or before the due date.
4. **Adherence to Library Rules:** Orientation helps users understand and follow the rules and regulations of the library, reducing the likelihood of violations.
5. **Improved Productivity:** Library orientation can boost productivity both within and outside the institution by providing users with the skills to efficiently access and use information.
6. **Familiarity with Library Sections:** Users gain exposure to various sections and units of the



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library, enhancing their ability to navigate and utilize different resources.

7. **Appreciation of Library Value:** Orientation helps users appreciate and value the library's role in their learning activities (Omeluzor, 2017).

**Challenges to Effective Library Orientation**

Library orientation programs encounter several obstacles due to the rapidly changing information technology landscape and the evolving needs of users. Anyaoku (2015) identifies student apathy as a major issue that diminishes the impact of orientation efforts. On the other hand, Idoko (2015) highlights problems such as insufficient student confidence in using library resources, inadequate teaching methods by librarians, and a lack of essential learning tools like computers. These challenges contribute to the reduced effectiveness of orientation programs.

Compounding these issues, institutions like Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University face limitations due to the absence of modern technological resources, such as projectors and reliable internet, which are crucial for effective orientation. Okoye (2013) further notes that many programs struggle with insufficient practical demonstrations on internet research, inadequate ICT facilities, and a shortage of professional staff. These factors collectively hinder the successful implementation of library orientation, affecting its ability to fully engage and support students.

**Method**

The study was conducted at the University Library of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) in Anambra State, focusing on the role and benefits of library orientation programs. The research was guided by three objectives and three research questions, utilizing a survey research design. The target population consisted

of 3,000 registered students at the library. A sample of 300 students was selected to ensure representation, with census sampling used to distribute the data collection instrument. On the day of distribution, only 60 students were present in the library, and their responses were used for the study. The collected data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages.

**Results****Table 1: Response Rate**

Description	Number	Percentage
Questionnaire Distributed	60	100%
Questionnaire Returned	60	100%

Table 1 above shows the analysis of the questionnaire distribution. It reveals a perfect response rate, as all 60 questionnaires distributed were returned, resulting in a 100% return rate. This indicates that the 60 students present in the library responded to the survey, reflecting complete engagement and providing a full dataset for analysis.

**Table 2: Types of Orientation Used in the Library**

Type of Library Orientation	Used	%	Not Used	%	I Don't Know	%
Classroom Instruction	60	100%	0	0%	0	0%
Orientation Session	44	73%	13	22%	3	5%
Guided Library Tour	0	0%	42	70%	18	30%
One-on-One Instruction	20	33%	26	43%	14	24%
Social Media	18	30%	31	51%	11	19%
Library Website	0	0%	46	77%	14	23%

The results presented in the table indicate that the most commonly used methods for library orientation at the institution were classroom instruction (60, 100%), orientation session (44, 73%), one-on-one instruction (20, 33%), and social media (18, 30%). Conversely, guided

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library tours (0, 0%) and the library website (0, 0%) were not utilized for library orientation, and some respondents indicated that they were unfamiliar with these methods. These findings align with the study by Omeluzor, Akibu, Dika, and Ukangwa (2017), which found that classroom teaching is the predominant method used in academic library orientations. The lack of modern methods, such as guided tours and digital resources, raises concerns about the future integration of ICT in library orientation. This absence means that library users may miss out on opportunities to fully understand and utilize the library's services. The non-use of contemporary methods could hinder users' ability to efficiently access library resources. It is recommended that Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University enhance its library orientation programs by incorporating modern techniques to improve the learning, teaching, and research experiences of its users.

**Table 3: Effect of Library Orientation on New Library Users**

Effect of Library Orientation	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
It has greatly improved my ability to identify, access, and retrieve information available in the library	38	63%	18	30%	3	5%	1	2%
Library orientation enhances my reading skills and turns me into a regular library user	32	53%	21	35%	5	8%	2	4%
It exposed me to different bibliographic databases available in the library	15	25%	25	42%	2	3%	18	30%
Library orientation made me aware of the scope of the library resources	36	60%	21	35%	3	5%	0	0%
It has improved my academic performance	43	72%	17	28%	0	0%	0	0%
It made me aware of the value of libraries in my academic pursuits and lifelong learning	32	53%	19	32%	7	12%	2	3%

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

Table 3 demonstrates that library orientation positively impacts library users and enhances their ability to utilize library information resources. The data reveals that the highest proportion of respondents strongly agreed with the positive effects of library orientation, totalling 196 responses (32.6%), followed by those who agreed at 121 responses (20.2%). Conversely, 23 respondents (3.9%) strongly disagreed, and 20 respondents (3.3%) disagreed. These findings align closely with Esse's (2014) study on the effects of library instruction, which found that library orientation programs significantly improve users' understanding of the library and its services.

**Table 4: Challenges of Library Orientation**

Challenges	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%
Inadequate classroom/space for the programme	2	3%	6	10%	18	30%	34	57%
Overcrowding	16	27%	12	20%	21	35%	11	18%
Lack of adequate instructional materials for the programme	53	88%	7	12%	0	0%	0	0%
In-conducive environment for the programme	23	38%	21	35%	9	15%	7	12%
Limited time allocated for the programme	12	20%	11	18%	16	27%	21	35%
Student negative attitude towards the programme	32	53%	18	30%	8	14%	2	3%
Inadequate and qualified staff for the programme	5	8%	7	12%	27	45%	21	35%
Lack of enough funds to support the programme	46	77%	11	18%	3	5%	0	0%

**Key:** SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

The user responses revealed a consistent view on the challenges facing library orientation, with limited variation across different issues. Notably, only 2 respondents (3%) strongly agreed that inadequate classroom space is a significant challenge. In contrast, a substantial majority, 53 respondents (88%), strongly agreed that the lack of

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instructional materials is a major challenge. Also, over half of the respondents identified other significant challenges from the questionnaire, including inadequate technological facilities, poor network/internet connectivity, outdated library collections, and unreliable power supply. These factors were consistently noted as obstacles to effective library use, with one-third to half of the respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing on their impact.

### Summary of Findings

The findings of the study on the role and benefits of library orientation at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU) provides detailed insights into both the effectiveness and challenges associated with the program. The analysis of orientation methods reveals that traditional approaches, such as classroom instruction and library orientation sessions, are predominantly utilized. In contrast, modern methods like guided library tours and library websites are not employed. This reliance on conventional methods, coupled with the absence of digital or interactive techniques, suggests that students may be missing out on more engaging and comprehensive ways to familiarize themselves with library resources. The lack of modern orientation methods raises concerns about how effectively the library is integrating information and communication technologies (ICT) into its services.

The impact of library orientation on new users is largely positive, as evidenced by the feedback from respondents. Many reported significant improvements in their ability to access and retrieve information, as well as enhanced academic performance. Also, users noted increased awareness of library resources and their importance in academic pursuits. These results support previous research that highlights the effectiveness of library instruction in improving user satisfaction and

understanding. The findings demonstrate that library orientation programs play a crucial role in helping students maximize their use of library services and contribute to their overall academic success.

However, the study also identifies several significant challenges that hinder the effectiveness of library orientation at COOU. Key issues include inadequate instructional materials and overpopulation, along with insufficient classroom space. Respondents also highlighted problems such as inadequate technological facilities, poor network or internet connectivity, outdated library collections, and unreliable power supply. These challenges highlight the need for improvements in both resources and facilities to enhance the library orientation experience. Addressing these issues is essential for ensuring that library orientation programs can fully support and engage students, ultimately leading to a more effective and user-friendly library environment.

### Conclusion

Effective orientation programs are fundamental for equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate and utilize library resources, thereby enhancing their overall academic success and fostering a positive attitude toward lifelong learning. This study highlights the vital role of library orientation programs in enhancing students' ability to effectively utilize library resources at Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University (COOU). Library orientation in the University is crucial because it introduces students to the library's facilities and resources, and significantly contributes to improving their information retrieval skills and academic performance. While traditional methods such as classroom instruction and library orientation sessions are widely used, the absence of modern techniques like guided tours and digital resources highlights a gap in the



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current approach. Therefore, addressing these gaps and overcoming challenges such as inadequate instructional materials, overpopulation, and poor technological infrastructure is essential for maximizing the benefits of library orientation.

**Recommendations**

Following the conclusions of the study, the recommendations listed below are suggested:

1. To enhance the effectiveness of library orientation, COOU library should integrate modern orientation methods such as guided library tours and digital resources. Utilizing interactive tools and online platforms can make orientation sessions more engaging and comprehensive, helping students become more familiar with the library's diverse resources, services and technologies.
2. To address the deficiencies in technological facilities, such as outdated computers and poor network connectivity, the COOU library should invest in up-to-date technology and ensure reliable internet access to support both the orientation process and the broader functionality of the library. This will provide students with a better understanding of how to use digital resources and tools effectively.
3. To overcome challenges like inadequate instructional materials and limited classroom space, COOU library should allocate more resources to support library orientation programs. Upgrading instructional materials, expanding classroom facilities, and ensuring a consistent power supply. These will improve the overall quality of orientation and better support the needs of students. The approach will also create a more conducive learning environment and facilitate a more effective orientation experience.

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