Library Aesthetic and Environmental Condition as Motivating Factors for Reading in a State University in Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examines library aesthetic and environmental condition as motivating factors for reading using Olusegun Oke Library, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria as case study. The study used the survey research method. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 300 postgraduate students from the University. Questionnaire was used as instrument for extracting information on library aesthetic and environmental condition from the respondents. The findings were collated and analysed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentage, frequency counts, tables, pie charts and bar chart. The findings from the study revealed that majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the aesthetic interior of the library. While majority of the respondents indicated that library aesthetic would motivate library usage. The paper concludes with recommendations on the need for university libraries to focus not only on developing collections and resources alone. They should also gear up efforts in developing and upgrading the aesthetic, physical structure and environment of the library to look beautiful and attractive in order to motivate readers since the library is the heart of an institution, both symbolically and in terms of its physical placement.*

Keywords: *Library, Aesthetic, Environmental Condition, Motivating Factor, Reading, State University, Nigeria.*

I. Introduction

An academic library is a library that is found and funded in order to fulfill the objectives of teaching, learning and research of her parent institution. It is the type of library found in tertiary institutions. The academic library has always held a central position as the heart of an institution, both symbolically and in terms of its physical placement (Freeman, 2005). Academic libraries are among the most heavily used buildings on campus at many colleges and universities (Demas 2005). Users take the library space created for them and use it to meet their own individual and collective needs, sometimes in unexpected ways (Peterson 2005). Academic libraries reflect the needs of scholarship, teaching programme and the special character and style of the institution. It should reflect some of the architectural concepts and construction practices of its particular design team and era which should work towards motivating users.

As a result of the revolutionary change in the traditional methods used by academic libraries in acquisition, processing, storage, accessibility, retrieval and dissemination of quality information to users, there is no doubt that a wealth of high-quality information resources can now be accessed electronically with the aid of information and communication technology (ICT) using desktops, laptops etc. wherever we may be without coming to the library. But can this indicate that physical services to the library users are gradually fading out? Does that render the physical structure and aesthetic of academic libraries irrelevant? Does that mean that the entire academic library's collections can be accessed by users at their fingers tips? It is important to note that these information resources and other components including the building that house them make up the library.

Therefore, efforts should not stop in developing academic library's collections alone, but must also be geared up to develop and upgrade the aesthetic, physical structure and environment of the library to look beautiful and attractive in order to motivate users since human beings are lovers of aesthetic.

II. Literature Review

According to the World Book Encyclopedia (2008), the beauty of a city or town is largely determined by the quality of its architecture. Thus, the beauty of an academic library should also be determined by its architecture. The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000) defines architecture as the design or style of a building(s), while aesthetic is concerned with beauty, art and the understanding of beautiful things. Thus, the architecture of an academic library should be good, pleasing to behold and also of good aesthetic value. The artist behind the creation of different designs and styles of building structures which would bring out its aesthetic appreciation is called an architect. Architects design domestic structures, industrial structures, social structures, recreational structures, religious structures and educational structures including the academic library.

One of the basic functions of a library is to house the libraries collections, provide adequate space for users, staff administration and procedures, and offer acceptable accommodation and environmental condition in which the collections can be used. However, as a result of the functions and services of academic libraries, the architect should cater for enough reading space, study space, work room, discussion area, equipment room, stack area, and relaxation area. Although architecture has artistic qualities, it must also satisfy a number of important practical requirements. Thus, an architect may design an academic library building that looks aesthetically beautiful, if users cannot read comfortably in it, it fails architecturally therefore; both of them should blend together. Moreover, the architecture of an academic library should also give room for proper ventilation and adequate illumination. Lending credence to this, the World Book Encyclopedia (2008) stated that an architect must balance three major elements: function, appearance and durability in order to create an attractive and efficient building because every building is designed for certain purpose. A functional building; whether a small house, a library or a gigantic office building fulfills those purposes by serving the needs of its users in a pleasant and convenient way.

Besides, an academic library building should also be designed to provide adequate heating, alternate source of power and in some cases, air conditioning/fan due to the number of readers that make use of the library at a time. The architect must make sure that hundreds or perhaps thousands of users, staff and visitors can move easily and quickly through the various parts of the academic library building. An architect also determines aesthetically, the exterior appearance of the building not only by it shape but also by the choice of materials. All the parts of a building should be in proper relation to one another, neither too large nor too small because proportion is vital to an academic libraries' building appearance. Moreover, the size and shape of the building should blend with its site and surrounding to create an aesthetic beauty.

An academic library is intended to stand a long time and have a strong foundation. Makinde and Oyewumi (2002) submit that the library building should be both functionally and architecturally suitable for library purpose. It should last for many years without costly maintenance. In addition, the exterior must be able to resist wear from weather, and high-quality materials must be used in the interior to create aesthetic beauty.

Apart from academic library aesthetic, the environmental condition of the library can be regarded as the strength of the library. The indoor and outdoor environments of the library should motivate users to come to the library to read and make use of its resources. Hence, the environment that is free from noise, excessive heat, dark interior, inadequate furniture and uninviting landscape would motivate users. Oyedum and Nwalo (2011) also agree that an ideal learning environment in which all the learning enabling factors such as adequate ventilation, noise free reading areas, adequate lighting and furniture are provided positively influence and motivate users. Lending credence to this, Makinde and Oyewumi (2002) are also of the opinion that attention should be paid more to providing an attractive exterior, a convenient layout and a pleasing condition for users so that they can browse at leisure. Moreover, a serene, attractive and conducive exterior motivates users and promotes learning. There is therefore no gainsaying the fact that any academic library and learning environment in general must be functional in design, aesthetically pleasing and inviting in appearance. To buttress this fact, Dismento (1993) identifies three physical environmental characteristics as thermal, visual and aural. He states that, to achieve a desirable thermal environment, the first consideration is to ensure that the environmental temperature and relative humidity agree with comfort standard but if otherwise, air conditioning is the best solution to thermal discomfort while cross ventilation must be ensured in a hot and humid environment such as in Nigeria. In visual environment, very low level of illumination and excessive illumination cause discomfort glare. While in aural environment, all unwanted sound (sounds not associated with the central stimulus) usually of random nature in time and intensity tend to cause distraction, depending on the arousal level of the person performing the task. The attention of the central stimulus breaks down and the environment most often constitute what is tagged "noise". Therefore, the library should be sited in a serene environment devoid of noise.

This is in agreement with the opinion of Anyaoku and Ajala (2010) that in the library, personnel, information materials, users, and building\environment are the components that interact to make up the system. According to Smith Kathlin (2005) while writing the preface to the book, Council on Library and Information Resources, he wrote, 'We are still far from the day when students, researchers and teachers can access entire research collections from their desktops'. Evans (2000) cited by Ukejianya C. R. (2007) states that, there is an all-too-common faith that the electronic sources are accurate, complete, and up-to-date. He further states that, even if the brave new world of electronic information comes to pass, there will be a need to locally maintain the library collections' paper-based resources to remain a major source for scholarly activity. This can only be possible in a library building. Rui et. al. (1999) are of the opinion that the introduction of information technology and electronic resources into librarianship has made the library to no longer be seen as an exclusive place to acquire information, and the use of online resources is evident and visible in libraries globally, the developing countries inclusive. However, not all information is available online, as the available online information seems to be a tiny proportion of the past and new knowledge. They also state further that, the print (reference) materials would remain vital to some library users depending on the type of information needed.

In order to achieve the aims of academic library's provision of information resources and making same accessible and well consulted by users, thereby fulfilling the role of supporting the parent institution in achieving the basic objective of teaching, learning and research, the academic library's architecture and aesthetic should be made attractive with adequate facilities in a beautiful and conducive environment. This would motivate the active reader and other potential users to visit the library to read the available and accessible information resources.

Since the academic library is to serve all categories of students, staff, researchers and also visitors, it should be designed to accommodate and serve its users effectively without any hindrance, and for a long period of time. It is important for a library building to be pleasing to look at, motivate users and staff to work in it comfortably and efficiently. The structure should be well built so that it can stand a long time without expensive maintenance. Hence, the librarian and architect must work in close collaboration to fashion out an attractive and motivating library building where users will be maximally comfortable in order to assimilate whatever they are reading (Makinde and Oyewumi, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Librarians have sometimes complained that some of the library buildings which have been used to accommodate libraries have been inadequate for the demands made upon them. Besides, the environmental condition and exterior does not express the purpose and functions of the interior. This is because most of those who commission library buildings are not librarians and their priority may be different. Moreover, failure by the library architects to consult with the librarian or with library experts often result in the inadequacy of the library.

Research has been conducted by researchers and scholars on availability and accessibility of information sources and resources as it affects learning and the roles of libraries. Currently, little research about those who use the library because of its aesthetic has been conducted. Likewise, few researches have been conducted on library aesthetic and environmental condition as motivating factors for reading especially in the university system. Hence, the efforts of these researchers to embark on the research to find out whether library aesthetic and environmental condition are motivating factors for reading.

Objectives
1. To find out whether library aesthetic and environmental condition motivate users to read
2. To examine whether the library has adequate reading/study rooms and other conveniences.
3. To find out how the library reading\study spaces motivate readers.
4. To identify the challenges inhibiting readers on effective use of the library.
5. To offer suggestions for improvement.
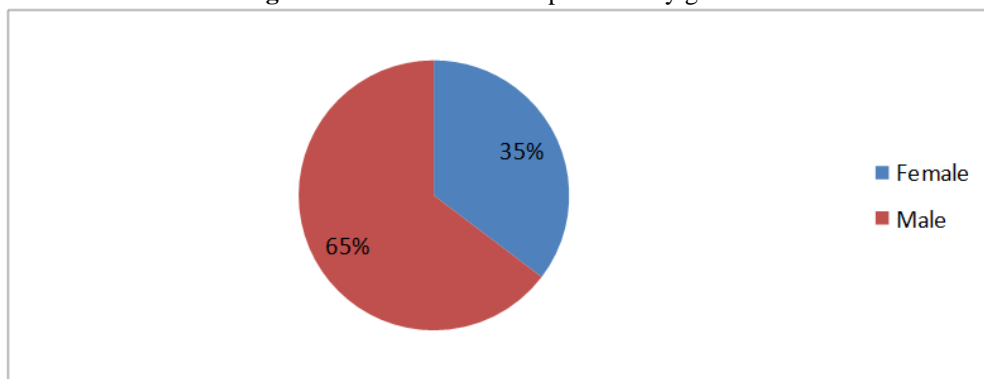
III. Methodology
The data for this study were collected by administering questionnaire to postgraduate students from Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, Oyo State. The statistics of postgraduate students who registered and made use of the library within the period when this study was carried out was obtained from the readers' services librarian. An average of 300 respondents was therefore captured. Copies of the questionnaire were personally administered by the researchers to the respondents with the assistance of six trained research assistant and collected on the spot. The questionnaire was administered in the postgraduate reading room, virtual library and the reserved/reference reading room of the library over a period of one month including Saturdays (Sunday was exempted because the university library does not open to users).

The choice of postgraduate students was preferred because, as observed by the researchers, they have gone through undergraduate training in different universities probably within or outside Nigeria before gaining admission to the University for the Postgraduate Programme. Therefore, they would be in a better position to give information on aesthetic and environmental conditions of the university library because they would have bases for comparison.

IV. Analysis And Results
All copies of questionnaire administered on the postgraduate students were retrieved. In addition, they were correctly filled, found useful and analysed thereby giving a response rate of 100%. This is an indication that students know the importance of aesthetic and environmental condition of the university library as it affects their reading and motivation in relation to their academic pursuit.

Figure 1: Distribution of respondents by gender

The results of the finding in Figure 1 revealed that 105 (35%) were female respondents while 195 (65%) respondents were male. This implies that the genders were fairly represented in the study however, it also suggest that there were more male postgraduate students who made use of the library at the time the study was carried out.

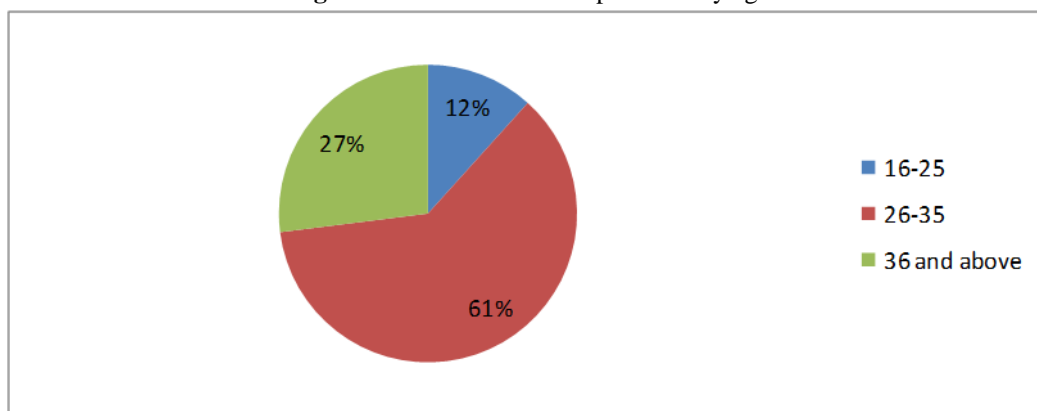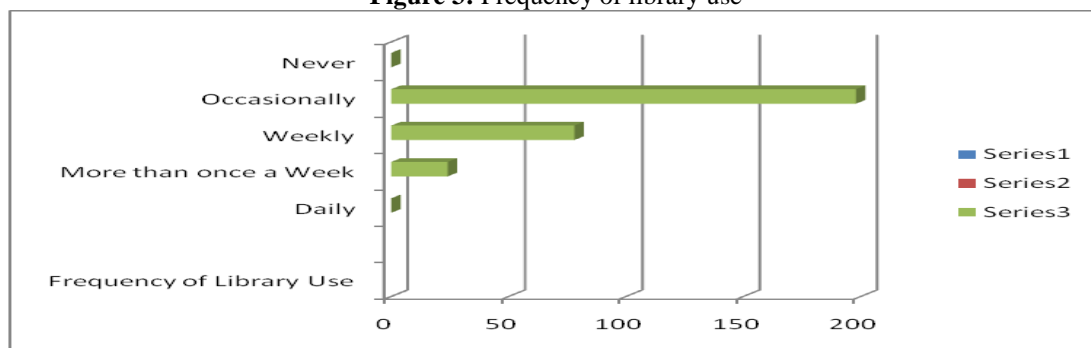**Figure 2:** Distribution of respondents by age

Figure 2 presents the age distribution of respondents. Majority 183 (61%) of the respondents were between the ages of 26 – 35 years while 36 (12%) were between 16 - 25 years age range. This indicates that most of the respondents were matured adults, who are in their mentally active stage, can still read intensively and in the researchers' opinion could perceive their whole duty as purely academic.

Figure 3: Frequency of library use

The frequency of library use was examined. The results of the finding in Figure 3 shows that 198 (66%) of the respondents visit the library occasionally, 78 (26%) make use of the library weekly, while 24 (8%) frequent the library more than once a week. The high percentage of respondents who frequent the library occasionally could be because the university is non-residential and they come to the campus only when they have lectures, when they need to consult with their supervisors, during examination periods and when they need information in the library.

Table 1: Purpose of using the library

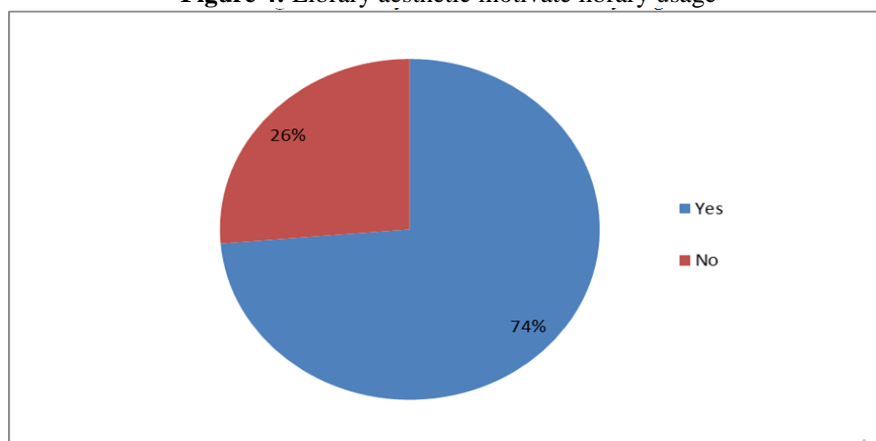| Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
For general information	39 (13%)	45 (15%)	144 (48%)	72 (24%)
For examination preparation	60 (20%)	54 (18%)	96 (32%)	90 (30%)
Pleasure/Leisure reading	24 (8%)	10 (3.33%)	146 (48.67%)	120 (40%)
Gather materials for projects/thesis and assignments	75 (25%)	153 (51%)	30 (10%)	42 (14%)
To read lecture notes/textbooks	36 (12%)	42 (14%)	122 (40.7%)	100 (33.3%)
To enhance intellectual development	18 (6%)	26 (8.67%)	136 (45.33%)	120 (40%)
Others (Specify)	-	-	-	-

The results of the finding in table 1 above revealed that 84 (28%) of the respondents agree that they use the library for general information while 216 (72%) disagree. Besides that, 114 (38%) of the respondents agree that they use the library for examination preparation while 186 (62%) disagree. On the other hand, 34 (11.33%) of the respondents agree that they use the library for pleasure/leisure reading while 266 (88.67) respondents disagree. In the same vein, 228 (76%) of the respondents agree that they use the library in order to gather materials for projects/thesis and assignments while 72 (24%) respondents disagree. Moreover, 78 (26%) of the respondents agree that they use the library to read lecture notes/textbooks while 222 (74%) respondents disagree. Not only that, 44 (14.67%) of the respondents agree that they use the library to enhance intellectual development while 256 (85.33%) respondents disagree. The finding here revealed that postgraduate students visit the library to gather information mostly when they are writing their projects, thesis and assignments.

Table 2: Aesthetic interior of the library

Items	Very much satisfied	Satisfied	Not satisfied	If not satisfied, give reason.
Attractiveness and motivating interior environment	45 (15%)	84 (28%)	171(57%)	Nil
Aesthetic beauty of furniture and shelves	36 (12%)	63 (21%)	201 (67%)	Nil
Natural lighting/ when there is no power supply	153 (51%)	84 (28%)	63 (21%)	Nil
Cleanliness of library building	54 (18%)	84 (28%)	162 (54%)	Nil
Adequacy of conveniences provided	101(33.67%)	145 (48.33%)	54 (18%)	Conveniences are not opened to users
Architectural design and or physical structure	45 (15%)	29 (9.67%)	226 (75.33%)	Nil
Others (Specify)	-	-	-	-

Table 2 presents the aesthetic interior of the library. 129 (43%) of the respondents were satisfied with aesthetic interior environment of the library while 171(57%) were not. On the other hand, 99 (33%) of the respondents were satisfied with the aesthetic beauty of the furniture and shelves while 201 (67%) were not satisfied. Besides, 237 (79%) of the respondents were satisfied with the natural lighting of the library when there is no power supply while 63 (21%) were not satisfied. Not only that, 138 (36%) of the respondents were satisfied with the cleanliness of the library building while 162 (54%) were not. In the same vein, 246 (82%) of the respondents were not satisfied with the adequacy of the conveniences provided while 54 (18%) were satisfied. Moreover, 74 (24.67%) of the respondents were satisfied with the architectural design and or physical structure of the library while 226 (75%) were not satisfied. The findings here revealed that majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the aesthetic interior of the library.

Figure 4: Library aesthetic motivate library usage

As shown in figure 4, majority 222 (74%) of the respondents indicated that library aesthetic motivate library usage while the least, 78 (26%) respondents said 'No'. The finding here indicate that library aesthetic motivate library usage the more.

Table 3: Environmental condition of the library

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
It has a convenient entrance and exit	24 (8%)	10 (3.33%)	165 (55%)	101 (33.67%)
It has adequate parking space	150 (50%)	81 (27%)	24 (8%)	45 (15%)
It has a beautiful external environment	161 (53.67%)	105 (35%)	34 (11.33%)	-
Others (specify)	-	-	-	-

The result of the finding in table 3 shows the environmental condition of the library. 34 (11.33%) of the respondents agree that the library has a convenient entrance and exit while 266 (88.7) respondents disagree. On the other hand, majority 231 (77%) of the respondents agree that the library has adequate parking space while 69 (23%) respondents disagree. Moreover, majority 266 (88.67%) of the respondents agree that the library has a beautiful external environment while 34 (11.33%) respondents disagree. The finding here suggests that, majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the library has a suitable and attractive environment.

Table 4: Problems encountered in using the library

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Movement within the library building is not encouraging	68 (22.67%)	112 (37.33%)	78 (26%)	42 (14%)
Interior environment is not motivating and conducive due to excessive heat, movement and noise	98 (32.67)	69 (23%)	73 (24.33%)	60 (20%)
Seats are inadequate	22 (7.33%)	48 (16%)	132 (44%)	98 (32.67%)
No private reading rooms for postgraduate students	152 (50.67%)	130 (43.33%)	18 (6%)	-
Restricted library hours	102 (34%)	124 (41.33%)	65 (21.67%)	9 (3%)
Others (Specify)	-	-	-	

The result of the finding in Table 4 shows that, majority 180 (60%) of the respondents indicated that the movement within the library building is not encouraging while 120 (40%) respondents disagree. Besides that, higher percentage 167 (55.67%) of the respondents agree that the interior environment of the library is not motivating and conducive due to excessive heat, movement and noise while 133 (44.33%) respondents disagree. Not only that, 70 (23.33%) of the respondents agree that seats were inadequate while majority 230 (76.67%) respondents disagree. Furthermore, majority 282 (94%) of the respondents agree that there is no private reading room for post graduate students while 18 (6%) respondents disagree. Moreover, majority 226 (75.33%) of the respondents agree that there is restricted library hours in the library while 74 (24.67%) respondents disagree. The finding here suggests that postgraduate students encountered different problems while using the library.

V. Discussion Of Findings
The findings of the study revealed that 105 respondents which represent 35% were female while 195 representing 65% respondents were male. This implies that the genders were fairly represented in the study however, it also suggest that there were more male postgraduate students who made use of the library at the time the study was carried out. Another finding of the study was that majority of the respondents 183 (61%) were between the ages of 26 – 35 years, while 36 (12%) were between 16 - 25 years age range. This indicates that most of the respondents were matured adults, who are in their mentally active stage, can still read intensively and in the researchers' opinion could perceive their whole duty as purely academic.

Besides, the study also found that majority of the respondents 198 (66%) visit the library occasionally, 78 (26%) make use of the library weekly, while 24 (8%) frequent the library more than once a week. The high percentage of respondents who frequent the library occasionally could be because the university is non-residential and they come to the campus only when they have lectures, when they need to consult with their supervisors, during examination periods and when they need information in the library.

Furthermore, the study also found that majority of the respondents 228 (76%) agreed that they use the library in order to gather materials for projects/thesis and assignments, followed by 114 (38%) of the respondents who agreed that they use the library for examination preparation. This is in corroboration with Peterson (2005) who opined that users take the library space created for them and use it to meet their own individual and collective needs, sometimes in unexpected ways. Not only that, the study also found that majority of the respondents was not satisfied with the aesthetic interior of the library. In the same vein, the study also found that majority 222 (74%) of the respondents indicated that library aesthetic motivate library usage. This is in

agreement with the World Book Encyclopedia (2008) which states that human beings are lovers of aesthetic as an aesthetically pleasing building would always attract great attention. Oyedum and Nwalo (2011) also agreed that an ideal learning environment in which all the learning enabling factors such as adequate ventilation, noise free reading areas, adequate lighting and furniture are provided positively influence and motivate users.

Moreover, the findings of the study also revealed that majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the university library has a suitable and attractive environment for reading. While another finding of the study was that the respondents encountered different types of problems from the movement within the library building that is not encouraging, excessive heat, movement and noise, no private reading room for post graduate students and restricted library hours in the library. Lending credence to this, Makinde and Oyewumi (2002) are of the opinion that attention should be paid more to providing an attractive exterior, a convenient layout and a pleasing condition for users so that they can browse at leisure.

VI. Conclusion

The academic library holds a unique position on campus. No other building can so symbolically and physically represent the academic heart of an institution. Significantly, it must serve as the principal building in the university where users can truly experience the benefit from the centrality of an institution's intellectual community. Moreover, academic libraries have particular pressures for continuing growth and change. There is therefore no doubt that academic libraries are going through tumultuous changes in their architectural design to bring out their aesthetic beauty in order to motivate users.

The library building must be able to accommodate change readily than any other type of academic building in the university. Since the primary goal of effective library aesthetic is that the facility and environmental condition must motivate users and respond to the needs of its service to them at all time.

Thus, if the library is to remain a dynamic life force, it must support the academic community in several new ways. It must be well located in a serene environment, aesthetically pleasing, beautiful, inviting and environmentally motivating. Its space must flexibly accommodate evolving information technologies and their usage as well as become a "laboratory" for new ways of teaching and learning in a wired or wireless environment. Every entirely new building offers appreciably greater freedom of expansion, architectural design and renovation unlike an addition to an older or existing structure which has its own constraints. Therefore, the academic library must be a building constructed for its purpose. It should include flexibility in the aesthetic design of its interior and exterior in order to accommodate new innovations and effectively and efficiently address the immediate and future needs of its teeming users. In conclusion, the library, by its architectural and aesthetic expression, environmental condition and sitting, must continue to reflect the unique legacy and traditions of the institution of which it is a part (Freeman, 2005).

VII.   Recommendations

Life is not static and human beings are lovers of aesthetic. In constructing a new university library, there is the need for the architect and librarian to work in close collaboration to fashion out an attractive and functional university library building that would attract and motivate readers. Moreover, the physical structure of an existing university library can be upgraded and renovated to reflect new changes that can motivate readers.

To enhance good reading ability, there is the need to make the interior of the library aesthetically beautiful, comfortable and conducive for reading. Air-conditions and or fans should be installed into the existing reading rooms in order to reduce excessive heat. In addition, private reading rooms should be provided and made accessible to postgraduate students only. Cleanliness of the university library and its environment should not be taken with levity. Adequate conveniences should be provided for postgraduate students bearing in mind that they are matured readers. Efforts should also be made to provide good looking, inviting landscape and adequate parking space for the libraries teeming users.

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