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POLICY BRIEF

Assessing User Satisfaction at the Davao Oriental State University Library: A Basis for Future-Proofing Services Amid Global Challenges

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ABSTRACT

Rapid technological change is reshaping how libraries deliver services and what users expect. This study measured user satisfaction at the Davao Oriental State University (DOrSU) library to identify priorities for keeping its services relevant. Using a descriptive quantitative design, the researchers surveyed 393 regular library users, selected through purposive sampling, using a self-constructed questionnaire validated by experts. Users reported high satisfaction with facilities, staff, collections, programs and events, and their overall impression of the library. Technology received the lowest rating, which was moderate. The brief recommends eight actions, grouped by priority, to keep library services aligned with international expectations.

Keywords: *Assessment, collections, facilities, services, staff, technology*

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INTRODUCTION

Rapid technological change is affecting how libraries deliver services and how satisfied their users are. For the DOrSU library, the practical question is which services still meet users' needs and which need attention first. The answer matters because libraries are central to students' academic work (Fagyan et al., 2023). User satisfaction is a useful measure of whether services are working. Fagyan et al. (2023) also found that student satisfaction signals effective service delivery, and Scoulas and De Groote (2022) reported that well-delivered services can raise student satisfaction considerably. Earlier studies also show where satisfaction breaks down: outdated collections, poorly located resources, and obsolete physical amenities (Haruna et al., 2017; Kiilu and Otike, 2016). By contrast, libraries that meet educational needs with current information and flexible hybrid or remote options tend to provide a better user experience (Appleton, 2022; Idiegbeyan-Ose and Esse, 2013).



Figure 1. Library users doing their research and study during their free time, (A, B, C).

This brief therefore asks how satisfied DOrSU library users (Figure 1) are with six aspects of service (collections, facilities, staff, technology, programs and events, and overall impression) and what the university should do about the results. The aim is an actionable framework for future-proofing library services, that is, keeping them useful as technology and user expectations change.

Earlier research links four library service features to user satisfaction: collections, facilities, staff, and technology.

Collections. Current and relevant collections are widely seen as essential to student satisfaction (Fagyan et al., 2023; Scoulas and De Groote, 2019). Both the availability of physical books and, even more so, their online accessibility shape users' overall satisfaction (Appleton, 2022). Figure 2 presents the library's electronic resource utilization from 2024 to 2026, showing how much users accessed and used the available digital resources.

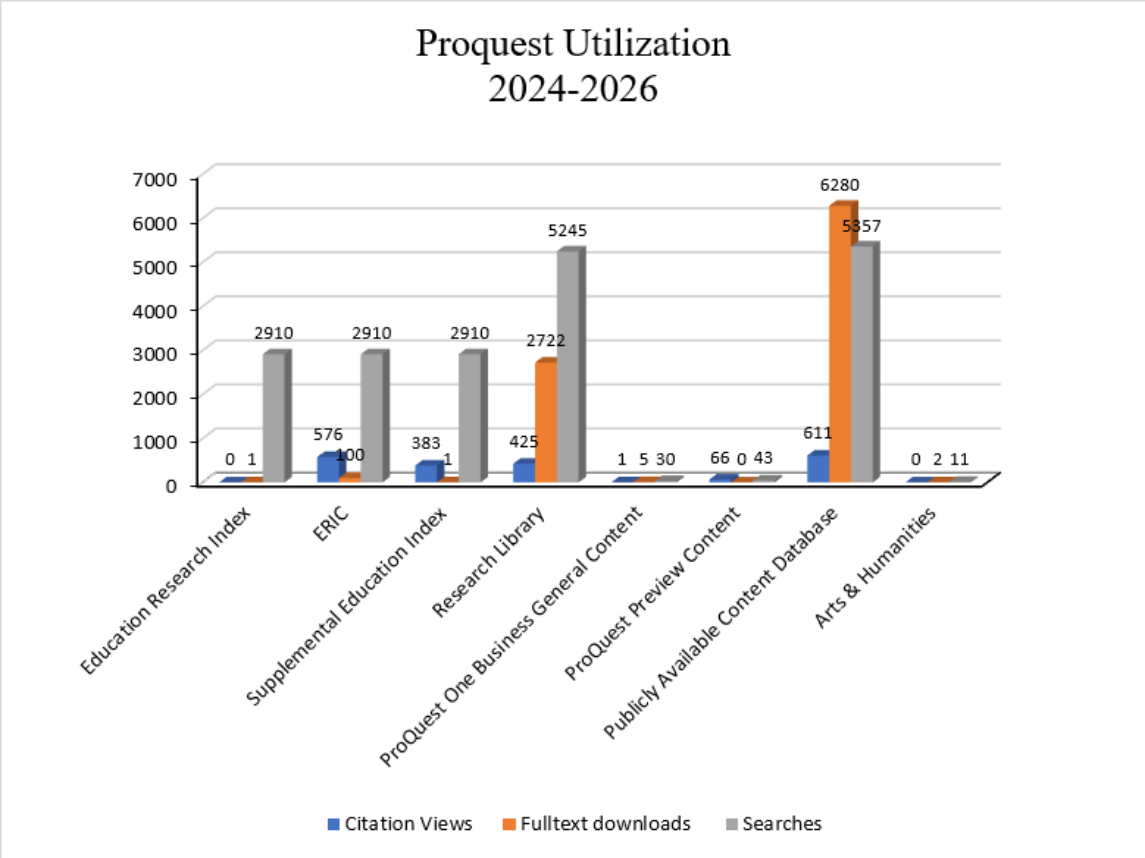

Figure 2. Utilization report from 2024-2026.

Facilities. Users' experience of accessibility and facility use also matters (Appleton, 2022; Fagyan et al., 2023). Killick (2023) noted that up-to-date, well-kept facilities help keep users satisfied. Continued investment in library resources, including digital materials and physical infrastructure, should therefore be considered.

Staff. Amarasekara and Marasinghe (2020) and Gyau et al. (2021) reported that users valued staff helpfulness, approachability, responsiveness, and knowledge. Other studies found that staff competence and knowledge strongly affect both user satisfaction and perceived service quality (Adeniran, 2011; Iwhiwhu and Okorodudu, 2012; Somaratna and Peiris, 2011; Wanyonyi et al., 2018).

Technology. Scoulas and De Groote (2019) argued that, given fast changes in technology and teaching methods, libraries must stay flexible and adaptable to meet users' evolving information needs. Appleton (2022) added that computer workstations, high-speed Wi-Fi, printers, scanners, and digital signage significantly affect student satisfaction. Adholiya et al. (2021) found students were very satisfied with the information and communication technology (ICT) services in their libraries, a result that points to the value of continued ICT development.

The study used a descriptive quantitative design, summarizing users' ratings with simple statistics rather than testing causal relationships. Data were collected during the second semester of school year (SY) 2025–2026 from 393 active users of the DOrSU main library, including students, faculty, and staff who were present during the data-collection periods. Respondents were chosen through purposive sampling, meaning the researchers deliberately selected regular library users rather than drawing a random sample. The researchers self-constructed the questionnaire and had experts validate it. It used a 3-point Likert scale, a rating scale on which respondents choose among ordered response options. The authors chose a short scale to reduce respondent fatigue, raise completion rates, and produce straightforward data suited to rapid institutional decisions. Frequency distributions described the respondents' demographic profile, and mean (average) scores measured satisfaction on six indicators: collections, facilities, staff, technology, programs and events, and overall impression. The DOrSU University Research Ethics Board granted ethical clearance and issued a certificate of ethical review completion.

Users reported high satisfaction overall (M = 2.67 on a 3-point scale). Facilities (M = 2.91) and staff (M = 2.90) received the highest ratings, followed by collections (M = 2.72), overall impression (M = 2.70), and programs and events (M = 2.63). Technology was rated lowest (M = 2.14) and was the only indicator at a moderate rather than high level (Table 1).

Table 1. Level of users' satisfaction in the Davao Oriental State University library.

Indicator	*M*	Descriptive level
Facilities	2.91	High
Staff	2.90	High
Collections	2.72	High
Overall impression	2.70	High
Programs and events	2.63	High
Technology	2.14	Moderate
Overall	2.67	High

Note: Ratings are on a 3-point scale. Descriptive levels: Low = 1.00–1.66; Moderate = 1.67–2.33; High = 2.34–3.00.

The results point in one direction. The high ratings for facilities, staff, and collections show a strong service culture that supports the current needs of students and faculty. The moderate technology rating is the exception, and it matters because teaching and research are moving toward hybrid education, remote access to information, and artificial intelligence (AI). In the authors' view, the library is succeeding under a service model that is becoming outdated, and without a stronger ICT framework, it cannot fully support advanced research or meet international evaluation benchmarks. If the gap persists, it may also reduce the benefit of the library's well-rated spaces, staff and overall service delivery (Alam and Mezbah-ul-Islam, 2023).

Two frameworks are consistent with this reading. The first is LibQUAL+, a service-quality survey model developed by Cook et al. (2001) with the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). It assesses users' expectations along three dimensions: the effect of service (the quality of staff interaction), information control (access to information resources), and the library as a place (the physical environment). It identifies gaps by comparing the service level users consider minimum, the level they desire, and the level they perceive. Areas below the minimum become priorities for improvement; these can include services, resources (staff, collections, and spaces), expectation management, and organizational culture. The second is Weiss's Theory of Change, a framework that links initiatives to the results they are meant to produce (Reinholz and Andrews, 2020). After a careful assessment of services, the library needs mechanisms that sustain quality and support continuous improvement. Each service area should be evaluated regularly so the library keeps pace with global trends in meeting users' learning, teaching, and research needs, and the university's internationalization goals should guide those evaluations. The framework can also help administrators and librarians make more critical, better-informed decisions as they plan and carry out change.

Taken together, the evidence calls for a change of emphasis: from physical upkeep alone to digital transformation of library services. Closing the technology gap would protect user satisfaction and give the university the reliable connectivity and digital assets it needs to pursue its accreditation, standardization, and international ranking goals. The recommendations below show how.

CONCLUSION

The comprehensive assessment of the Davao Oriental State University library shows that while traditional pillars remain exceptionally strong, overall institutional progress is constrained by technological gaps. High satisfaction ratings for physical facilities, staff responsiveness, and relevant collections show a deeply ingrained service culture that effectively supports current student and faculty needs. However, the mediocre rating for technology highlights an acute systemic vulnerability that threatens the library's relevance in a digital-first academic ecosystem. The implications are clear: the library is operating successfully under an outdated service-delivery model. In an era increasingly defined by hybrid education, remote information retrieval, and artificial intelligence, an academic library cannot fully sustain advanced research or secure international evaluation benchmarks without an advanced ICT framework. Failing to modernize this domain will inevitably degrade the impact of its high-performing spaces and human resources. Therefore, the institutional strategy must shift from basic physical upkeep to dynamic digital transformation. Addressing this technology gap will safeguard patron satisfaction while providing the university administration with the robust connectivity and digital assets necessary to secure competitive international rankings and standardization goals.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The eight recommendations below are grouped by priority. Priority 1 actions address the technology gap directly and secure the funding that enables the other actions. Priority 2 actions focus on building digital content and staff capacity. Priority 3 actions protect and govern the investment.

Priority 1: Act now to close the technology gap

1.1 Formalize an ICT modernization policy

Retaining traditional space models without modern workflow automation causes bottlenecks at service desks and slows inventory management. Adopt an ICT Modernization Policy and allocate immediate capital funds to replace obsolete workstations and to install automation tools: UHF RFID self-check systems (ultra-high-frequency radio-frequency identification, which lets users check out items themselves), book-return kiosks, security flap gates, and mobile inventory checkers. Add flexible collaborative areas, charging stations, and space-efficient, attractive furniture.

1.2 Upgrade the network infrastructure

Slow network speeds and coverage gaps undermine digital services and prevent users from fully leveraging newly acquired subscription databases. Provide uninterrupted, high-speed Wi-Fi across all library spaces, backed by a rapid-response IT support framework that resolves connection and hardware failures promptly.

1.3 Redesign the library website

Non-intuitive digital platforms create a barrier for users doing research off campus. Redesign the library website into an easy-to-use, mobile-friendly interface that makes it simple to navigate repositories, digital catalogues, and real-time service updates, and that is accessible across DOrSU campuses. Currently, the library disseminates information on access to collections, services, promotion, and other updates through its Facebook page.

1.4 Provide sustainable funding for library improvements

Without close administrative coordination, the library cannot maintain the infrastructure required to meet international evaluation benchmarks or close digital equity gaps. Library managers, university administrators and finance partners need to establish a collaborative governance framework for permanent budget allocations. This funding should explicitly support ongoing digital transformation, including advanced ICT upgrades, expanded remote access to premium research databases, and modernizing physical facilities, to ensure the library remains a highly functional hub for institutional research and student engagement.

Priority 2: Build digital content and staff capacity

2.1 Adopt a hybrid acquisition policy

Reliance on printed materials limits remote access and hybrid learning and risks falling short of current Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines (AACCUP) standards, which require digitized access. Mandate a strategic shift to hybrid acquisition, combining print and electronic resources. Request budget for substantial subscriptions to e-books and e-journals indexed in major international citation databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. If funds are limited, a consortium of academic libraries, in which members share subscription costs, is a practical alternative.

2.2 Implement uniform access to digital collection across libraries

To bridge the geographical divide and to meet the university's mandate for inclusive growth, institutional library policies must provide for uniform access to electronic resources across all DOrSU campuses. Provide seamless remote authentication to high-impact e-books, online databases (e.g. Scopus, Web of Science) and digital learning repositories.

2.3 Train library personnel in digital librarianship

Library personnel cannot support the university's internationalization or manage advanced data networks without regular training in contemporary digital librarianship. Mandate and fund ongoing professional development focused on digital systems. Encourage library information specialists to conduct research and publish in peer-reviewed journals to expand global collaboration.

Priority 3: Protect and govern the investment

3.1 Institutionalize a preventive maintenance policy

Neglected facilities and electronics lead to premature hardware failures and downtime, which would erode the library's currently high user satisfaction. Include a Preventive Maintenance. Policy in the annual operating plan, with firm, recurring maintenance schedules for all structural areas, printers, scanners, and network systems.

3.2 Adopt smart technologies under an institutional AI policy

Ad hoc adoption of smart technologies without clear boundaries poses data privacy and academic integrity risks. Formally recognize the value of automation by incorporating smart AI tools into library sorting and data-processing workflows, governed by an established institutional AI policy.

3.3 Enforce Mandatory Needs Assessment to Extension Libraries

Future capital spending and technological modernisation must be based on localised, empirical evidence, not central assumptions. Conduct a mandatory needs assessment for DOrSU extension libraries to determine their specific priorities and needs. Use localised findings to guide the deployment of advanced ICT resources, building upgrades and physical space optimisations..

PURPOSE AND AUDIENCE

This brief is written for university administrators, budget officers, and governing board members who make decisions about library policy and funding. It reports what library users said about DOrSU library services, identifies the main gap, and sets out recommended actions in order of priority. Technical terms are defined where they first appear.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

C. G. C: Conceptualization, Formal analysis and investigation, Writing—original draft preparation, Writing—review and editing; J. L: Methodology, Formal analysis and investigation, Writing—review and editing.

DECLARATIONS

Informed consent statement

All participants gave informed consent before participating, and the researchers strictly maintained confidentiality and anonymity in accordance with relevant ethical guidelines.

Conflict of interest

This work is original and has not been published in any form before submission to the Davao Research Journal. The authors declare no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

AI Declaration

The authors declare that they have not copied or written any statements in this manuscript without giving due recognition or citation to the works of other authors. The authors used AI tools to paraphrase the content.

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