

ELECTRONIC LIBRARY USE BY ACADEMIC STAFF AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN, NIGERIA

By

ISAH, Abdulmumin

abdulmumin.isah@yahoo.com

Department of Library and Information Science,
University of Ilorin
Ilorin, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the pattern of usage of electronic library by academic staff of the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. The goal of the study is to help the University library and the authority of the University identify the level of acceptance of the University e-library among academic staff, its effectiveness, and the availability of ICT infrastructure. Furthermore, the study identified factors contributing to and militating against usage of electronic library at the university. The results demonstrated that academic staffs are fully aware of the electronic library resources. Majority of the respondents (70%) claimed that they do not visit e-library to access e-resources, while, only 36.6% indicated that they access the e-library resources from their offices. Respondents are computer literate. However, slow internet access, power outage and non availability of e-resources relevant to their information needs were indicated as hindrances to the use of e-library. Part of the recommendations includes the fact that university library should re-orientate the academic staff of the University on how to access the electronic resources/databases subscribed to by the University.

Key words: Electronic library, ICT, Digital era, e-resources, academic staff,

INTRODUCTION

The advent of information and communication technology has accelerated availability and usage of electronic resources in the modern time. This global development has posed challenges to libraries and information institutions in their attempt to meet information needs of user in the digital era. Libraries are now investing heavily on electronic resources especially academic

libraries where users are exposed to various electronic resources outlets via internet. This development is noticeable in the developed nations of the world as African countries and other developing nations are still struggling to bridge the digital divide that is preventing them from the full benefits of electronic era. However, different efforts have been made to lunch African Universities into the digital society with different initiatives by both National and International bodies toward providing the required networked infrastructure that would enable them have access to free or heavily discounted Journals and databases through programmes like AGORA, elFL, HINARI and PERI (Rosenberg, 2005).

The Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Universities Commission (NUC) initiated various programmes designed to lunch Nigerian Universities into information global society. Among the projects according to Nok (2006) include automation of university libraries using Management Information Systems (MIS) and Nigerian Universities Network (NUNET) NUNET was aimed at developing a viable local and wide area network in each institution. Nigeria virtual library initiative is another step by Federal Government of Nigeria to provide higher institutions access to relevant and current information resources (Fabunmi, 2009).

Despite these efforts, many Universities are yet to harness the opportunities provided by these initiatives, due to inadequate facilities or lack of maintenance culture and even where these facilities are in place the potential users of these new information sources are not making use of the valuable electronic resources owing to lack of awareness or lack of skills required to navigate the modern technology. Corroborating this assertion, Abdullah (2006) noted that most users are unaware of the existence of e-books in library collections and that they are willing to discover and use them more effectively, also unfriendly interfaces or usability problems tend to hinder their further use of electronic resources. It is in the light of this that this paper intends to assess the awareness and use of the electronic library of the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON UNIVERSITY OF ILORIN

The University of Ilorin was established by a decree of the Federal Military Government of Nigeria in August, 1975 with mandate to implement one of the educational directives of the country's National Development Plans which aimed at providing more opportunities for

Nigerians aspiring to acquire university education and to generate high level of man-power. In line with this goal, the University of Ilorin Library was established in May 1976 to support teaching and learning of the parent institution. In order to meet information needs of the University community, the library acquired numerous print and electronic materials that cut across all disciplines of studies in the University. The University library, through the support of the National University Commission (NUC), subscribed to a number of electronic information resources (Databases) that are expected to also enhance teaching, learning and research activities of the University community. These electronic resources can be accessed either from the Electronic library centre or from any computer connected to the internet with the aid of User name and password already provided to members of the University community.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Aina (2004) defined Electronic library as a library that consist of materials and services in electronic formats rather than the print format. In another dimension, Shim et al (2001) defined Electronic library as those electronic information resources and services that users access electronically via a computing network from inside the library or remote to the library. Electronic library resources are invaluable research tools which complement print-based resources in any traditional library; they provide access to information that might be restricted to the user because of geographical location or finances (Sabouri, et al 2010). The emergence of electronic resources has cut the barrier to valuable information resources which until now were difficult to access especially by scholars in the developing nations of the world. Salaam (2008) attributed the popularity of electronic resources to flexibility in searching than their paper-based counterpart, and that they can be accessed remotely at anytime. Tenopir (2003) in a major survey analyzed the findings of over 200 studies on the use of electronic resources in libraries that were published between 1995 and 2003. The results revealed that, electronic resources have been rapidly adopted in academic spheres; however behavior varies according to the discipline.

According to Bar-Ilan, Peritz, and Wolman (2003) the most active users of electronic journals are the younger members of the teaching and research staff. In a related study, Bush (2004) showed that age was not an influential factor in whether the respondents read articles on

paper or in electronic format. Brennan et al (2002) in studies that centred on how the adoption of electronic information resources has affected academics' information behaviour revealed that faculty make fewer visits to the library and read more than in the print era across a broader number of journals. Most academics report using generic databases to locate information, while a few rely on smaller discipline-specific databases. Corroborating this, Dilek-Kayaoglu (2008) in a research on use of electronic journals by faculty at Istanbul University, also revealed that majority of respondents supported the transition from print to electronic resources.

The literature of e-resources reports the following user-centered barriers to e-resources use: a lack of skills in how to use information sources, a lack of appropriate reward for electronic scholarly communication, a lack of consistent technical support and provision and a lack of time to be spent on searching for information (Tompsett and Alsop 1997; Macias-Chapula 1995; Ray and Day 1998). In another recent survey of users of electronic resources carried out so far and summarized by Bar- Ilan and Fink (2005) shows that:

- Use of electronic journals increases with time.
- Age and/or academic position are inversely related to the use of electronic media and journals.
- There is a gradual reduction in the use of printed journals as users prefer and use the electronic format more.
- With increased use, users access the electronic format more frequently.
- The use of a journal is not necessarily an indication of the preference of users. There may be an increase in the acceptance and frequency of use of the electronic format merely because the traditional print format is no longer easily available.
- When respondents were asked about the advantages of electronic journals, accessibility and desktop access, home access, ease of retrieval and hyperlinks to outside content were the arguments cited most often. On the other hand, the disadvantages of electronic journals mentioned most often were the lack of back issues and problems with reading a text from the computer screen.

In the same vein, Watts and Ibegbulam (2006) examined some of the barriers to the usage of electronic information resources available at the medical library of College of Medicine, University of Nigeria, Nsukka their findings revealed that lack of an adequate ICT (information and communication technology) infrastructure and affordable online access, absence of in-depth ICT skills and information searching skills are barriers to the use of electronic resources. This corroborated Oduwole (2003) findings on use of electronic information resources at the University of Agriculture Library in Abeokuta, Nigeria, his study also identified lack of ICT and power supply outage as constraints to use of electronic resources.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to assess the awareness and usage of Electronic library resources by academic staff at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- find out academic staff's awareness of Electronic library
- find out the extent of use of electronic library resources of the University by academic staff
- find out the factors that contributes or hinders usage of the electronic resources

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey approach was used for this study. A questionnaire was constructed to gather information on academic staff's awareness and usage of electronic library resources at the University. The items in the questionnaire were adapted from questionnaire used in previous related studies. The questionnaire sought for the respondents' awareness of the E-Library, frequency of use, the purpose of use, and factors that limit effective use of the e-library.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population of academic staff at the University of Ilorin as at the time of this study stood at 812. From this total, a sample of 100 was taken using the simple random technique. This represents the population of the study. Israel (2003) model for determining sample size was used to arrive at this figure. The model states –taken sample size for $\pm 3\%$, $\pm 5\%$, $\pm 7\%$ and $\pm 10\%$ for Precision Levels Where Confidence Level is 95% and $P=.5$. Going by the model, if ± 10 was taken for precision when the population is 812, the sample should be 89. This justifies the sample used in this study which is 100.

VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire used to gather data on this study, it was given to experts whose research areas are relevant to this study. Their observations and suggestions were used to review the draft questionnaire before final adoption. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, it was administered on ten participants out of the envisaged population of the study. A test-retest reliability method of three weeks interval was conducted, response obtained were subjected to Pearson Product Moment Correlation method and a reliability co-efficient of 0.78 was obtained.

PROCEDURE OF ADMINISTRATION OF INSTRUMENT

The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents. The exercise took two weeks. Out of 100 copies of the questionnaire administered, 90 were returned completely filled representing 90% return rate. These were used for data analysis on the study.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics including frequencies count and percentages were used in reporting the findings.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1: Profiles of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	69	76.7%
Female	21	23.3%
Total	90	100%
Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
MA., M.ed, MLIS M.Sc	55	61.1%
Ph.D	35	38.8%
Total	90	100%

Table 1 shows that there are more male respondents (76.7%) than female respondents (23.3%). This implies that there are more male academic staff than female across the various Faculties surveyed at the University. The table also shows that 55 (61.1%) hold masters degree and 35 (38.8%) are Doctorate degree holders.

Table 2: Awareness of electronic library

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Awareness of e-library centre	90	100%
Awareness of University's subscription to electronic databases	84	93.3%
Awareness of access to the University's e-resources via computer connected to internet from office	84	93.3%

Table 2 shows that all respondents (100%) are aware of the existence of Electronic library in the University. This rate of awareness of the electronic library must be due to the strategic location of the e-library in the University, quite different from where the main library is located. Also the majority of the respondents (93.3%) are aware of the University's subscriptions to electronic databases and its accessibility from their offices through a computer connected to internet. This may be connected to occasional e-mail posting by the University library to sensitize members of the University community on e-resources subscribed to by the University.

Table 3: Frequency and percentage distribution of visits /usage

Variables	E-Library Frequency	%	Internet Frequency	%	Main Library Frequency	%
Daily	15	16.6%	60	66.6%	0	0%
Weekly	0	0%	15	16.6%	15	16.6%
fortnightly	6	6.6%	0	0%	9	10%
Monthly	0	0%	0	0%	9	10%
Occasionally	54	60%	15	16.6%	57	63.3
Never	15	16.6%	0	0%	0	0%
Total	90	99.8%	90	99.8%	90	99.9

Table 3 shows that 60% of respondents use e-library occasionally, while 16% never visit or use the electronic resources of the e-library. On the contrary majority of respondents 66.6% use internet on daily basis to access free electronic resources, while 63.3% visits the University main library occasionally. These attitudes of respondents to the e-library and Main University library may be due to easy access to free electronic resources via internet connectivity provided by the University authority for all academic and non academic staff.

Table 4: pattern of use of electronic library resources

Variables	YES Frequency	Percentage YES (%)	NO Frequency	Percentage NO (%)
I visit the e-library centre to access e-resources	27	30%	63	70%
I access e-library resources from my office	33	36.6%	48	63.3%
I use e-library resources only for academic research	30	33.3%	60	66.6%
I'm satisfied with the e-resources the library	12	13.3%	78	86.6%

Table 4 shows that 70% of respondents claimed that they do not visit e-library to access e-resources, while, only 36.6% indicated that they access the e-library resources from their offices.

The respondents' attitudes to the use of e-library resources are not surprising because 60% of respondents indicated that they visit the e-library occasionally. Majority of respondents indicated that they do not use e-library for only academic research, meaning that apart from using it for academic purposes they also use it for other activities. The table also shows that 86% of the respondents were not satisfied with the e-resources services of the library.

Table 5: Hindrances to the use of electronic library resources

Variables	YES Frequency	Percentage YES (%)	NO Frequency	Percentage NO (%)
I'm not computer literate	0	0%	90	100%
Slow internet access	27	30%	63	70%
Lack of internet access	0			0%
Non availability of e-resources relevant to my information needs	18	20%	72	80%
Dislike reading from screen	12	13.3%	78	86.6%
Lack of constant power supply	27	30%	63	70%

Table 5 shows factors limiting use of the electronic resources. Slow internet access (30.0%), lack of constant power supply (30.0%) were major factors. Other less limiting factors were non availability of e-resources relevant to my information needs (20.0%) and dislike reading from screen (13.3%). However some respondents commented on difficulty in using User name and Password given to staff as means of getting access to electronic databases subscribed to by the university.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although, all academic staffs are aware of the existence of electronic library and e-resources in the University, this invaluable information sources have not been fully utilized by these academic staff as shown from the above findings. The rate at which the respondents depend on internet for free electronic resources shows that the internet facilities provided by the University authority is serving the academic staff as non of the respondents indicated lack of access to internet. This explained why only 30% of respondents indicated using the e-library centre to access electronic resources. Also affected is the level of patronage of the main library

where the university library collection in print and audiovisual materials can be consulted, majority of respondents 63.3% indicated that they visit the main library occasionally. This corroborates the finding of Brennan et al (2002) in studies that centred on how the adoption of electronic information resources has affected academics' information behavior. The finding revealed that faculty make fewer visits to the library and read more than in the print era across a broader number of journals which are accessible via internet.

Only 30% of the respondents indicated slow internet and lack of constant power supply as factors that prevented them from using the e-library resources, while 20% indicated non availability of e-resources relevant to their information needs. However some respondents commented on difficulty in using User name and Password given to staff as means of getting access to electronic databases subscribed to by the university.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made, That:

- University library should re-orientate the academic staff of the University on how to access the electronic resources/databases subscribed to by the University.
- The internet facilities of the university should also be improved to facilitate easy access to the e-resources of the University
- Effort should be made to solve problem of incorrect User name and password provided for staff as means of accessing the e-resources of the University

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