Undergraduate Students' Use of E-Resources in Libraries in Niger State

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Abstract
Effective use of e-resources in the university libraries is necessary for the academic development of the students. This paper, therefore, assessed the relative effect of the available e-resources on undergraduate students' use of university libraries in Niger State. The study also ascertained the e-resources that made the greatest contribution to students' use of the libraries. Survey research design was used for the study and the study population was 130 undergraduate students from Federal University of Technology, Minna and Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. The main instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire. The two libraries as the study revealed mainly subscribe to Science Direct for accessibility of e-resources. The study revealed that e-resources such as e-journals, bibliographic databases, e-books, e-databases, e-newspaper and e-magazines and others were available in the university libraries studied. The study also revealed that of all the available e-resources considered together, e-journal and bibliographic database made the greatest contributions which are significant to undergraduate students' use of the university libraries. To enhance the level of the use of e-

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resources and the entire libraries by the undergraduate students, majority of the students indicated the need for provision of stable network services, followed by alternative power supply system and the provision of a regulatory body to govern the use of e-resources in the libraries.

Keywords: University Library, Electronic Resources, Use, Undergraduate Students, Niger State

Introduction

Modern libraries of today endeavour to provide a package of many related services with the help of computer networking which enables wireless linkages between libraries and information centers to pool resources and services irrespective of their physical location. Libraries are now shifting their roles from custodians of traditional information resources to providers of service-oriented digital information resources. Services such as automation of traditional library services, access to electronic resources to satisfy users' information needs are achieved in many academic libraries. In recent times electronic libraries are becoming more popular especially as they contain electronic resources. Electronic libraries are usually described as organized collections of digital information. They are collections organized for a particular community of users, and they are designed to support the information needs of that community (Saracevic, 2000).

Electronic resources (E-resources) are defined as those electronic information resources and services that users access electronically via a computing network from locations inside the library or remote to the library (Shim, McClure and Bertot, 2001). Widespread use of computers, increased reliance on computer networks, rapid growth of the Internet and explosion in the quality and quantity of information compelled libraries to adopt new means and methods for the storage, sharing, retrieval and dissemination of information. Nowadays, libraries subscribe to e-journals, CDROM databases, online databases, web-based resources, and a variety of other electronic resources to assist users in retrieving their information needs.

Literature has identified some resources such as index databases, sound recordings, electronic journals, electronic books and other texts, electronic newspapers and magazines, electronic theses, image databases and reference sources as most available e-resources commonly observed and used in libraries. Indexes are reference source which provide bibliographic information about journal articles, as well as other types of materials. Online indexes allow one to search beyond the subject, author, or title options. Sometimes according to Shim, McClure and Bertot (2001) people refer to indexes as "Article Databases," since they are mainly used to search for articles in journals.

Other e-resources such as e-books, e-journals and other printed works are made available and accessible by libraries in different varieties like essays, poems, or historical documents. E-books and texts are also part of large, searchable online databases, while sound recordings are some databases which provide access to sound recordings. Similarly, reference sources like dictionaries, almanacs, encyclopaedias, and other reference sources are now online in full-text and image databases. The university libraries used as the case study of this research, Federal University of Technology (F.U.T.), Minna and Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida Lapai (IBBL) libraries mainly subscribe to Science Direct from where library users access e-journals, e-books and other e-resources to satisfy their information needs.

University libraries are established in order to provide adequate resources and services that would satisfy the information needs of the users. Thus, the Federal government through the university management provides fund for the building and maintenance of university libraries in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Accordingly, one therefore expects to observe efficient electronic resources supplementing the print resources in Nigerian university libraries. However, previous studies on the use of electronic resources available in the university libraries have revealed that not all the electronic resources satisfy users' information needs and so they are not frequently used. This is contrary to what is obtained in the developed countries where according to Chauhan (2004) most users in the university/ academic libraries search for their

information needs using various e-resources such as electronic journals (e-Journals), bibliographic databases, electronic books (e-books), index databases, e-newspapers etc.

This situation is really worrisome considering the fact that a lot is spent in providing library resources and services in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. It is based on this background that it became necessary for one to carry out a study and identify which of the electronic resources are mostly used in the libraries studied. Such knowledge is important especially these days that electronic libraries are identified and used as an indispensable tool in searching and retrieving information of various kinds. Also, such information would serve as a guide to these university libraries to improve in the provision of certain e-resources and de-emphasise others. Provision of inadequate e-resources in the libraries of tertiary institutions would lead to low use of the libraries which would invariably affect the academic achievement of the students. This will in turn cause a great loss of resources and budget on the side of the government and this needs to be checked.

Statement of the Problem

ICT and emergence of electronic information resources have greatly enhanced information-handling and management, especially in tertiary institutions in Nigeria where financial support towards library services is more reasonable. However, e-resources have not received adequate attention in some institutions while other institutions acquire less useful e-resources to the students at the expense of more useful ones. Although many studies have been conducted on the effects of e-resources on students' use of university libraries worldwide in order to recommend the best ways to improve library services for more effective library use, little attention has been given to the relative effect of e- resources such as e-journals, e-books, e-magazines, e-newspapers etc on students' use of university libraries. It is important to determine the relative needs for e-resources and prioritise access to more useful ones.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated the relative effect of e-journals, e-books, e-newspapers, e-magazines etc on undergraduate students' use of university libraries in Nigeria. The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

i to ascertain the availability of e-resources in FUT Minna and IBBU Lapai libraries;

ii. to find out the undergraduates' use of e-resources in university libraries in Nigeria;

iii. to identify ways of enhancing better utilisation of e-resources in the university libraries by the undergraduate students.

Literature Review

Ebijuwa (2005) defined ICT as tools used for collection, processing, storage, transmission, and dissemination of information. With advances in ICT, electronic information resources such as electronic books, electronic journals, CDROM databases, OPAC, Online databases and the Internet have launched the world into an information age. No institution or organization can still rely on only traditional printed information resources to perform effectively and efficiently.

Chiparausha and Sithole (2008) highlighted that electronic information services have a lot of benefits. Firstly, E-journal articles and books can be well up to date. This is particularly interesting when an online version of a print equivalent is made available earlier whilst the print version is still 'in press'. This is an advantage to researchers who seek after current information. Secondly, electronic information is also associated with quite a number of search facilities making it relatively easier for one to search for the specific information he wants.

Bavakutty, Salih and Haneefa (2006) highlighted that modern libraries have become more and more aware of the revolutionary impact of developments in information dissemination. It provides opportunities for libraries and information centers to widen the scope of their resources and services and to increase their significance within the organization they serve. The increasing

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availability of information resources such as journals, books, patents, newspapers etc in machine readable form allows much information needs to be satisfied with decreased involvement of libraries and librarians.

Furthermore, libraries have been exploring to cope with the problems of ever increasing prices of journals, space requirements and decreasing level of usage as the journals get older. Nevertheless, libraries are required to maintain back issues of the journals, usually in bound form. Electronic journal helps the librarians in addressing these problems to a great extent without significantly affecting the service levels (Chauhan, 2004).

Similarly, E-book has been described as a text analogous to a book that is in digital form to be displayed on a computer screen. E-books can be read just like a paper book, using dedicated E-Book reader such as *Gemstar eBook* or on a computer screen after downloading it. In a recent exhaustive review of the literature on the subject, Tenopir (2003) and Borrego, Barrios and Anglada (2007) analyzed the results of over 200 studies of the use of electronic resources in libraries published between 1995 and 2003. The main conclusion of this review is that electronic resources have been rapidly adopted in academic spheres, though the behaviour varies according to the discipline.

Electronic information sources are becoming more and more important for the academic community (Kumar and Kumar, 2008). The emergence of electronic information resources has tremendously transformed information – handling and management in Nigerian academic environments, and University libraries in particular (Ani and Ahiauzu, (2008). General user opinion towards the use of electronic resources, in particular CD-ROM, has been positive, with students enjoying using these sources and finding relatively few problems while using them (Ray and Day, 1998). Lohar and Roopashree (2006) studied the use of electronic resources and how they are improving the academic carrier of the faculty and the problems that are faced in using the electronic resources. They indicated that electronic resources are often used in the libraries and concluded that use of e-resources in the libraries have brought remarkable changes in librarianship.

in order to provide bibliographic information of all the users consulted in producing any article. This process of giving the particulars of authorship, or others who have contributed to the work, such as title, edition, place and year of publication, volume, issue number and pages (in the case of journals and newspapers) are necessary for identification. In summary, the idea behind all these could be seen as putting a name to a source. Probably, these benefits and others are reasons why students mostly use journals and bibliographic database whenever they visit the library. This finding is in line with Ebijuwa (2005) who argued that with advances in ICT, electronic information resources such as electronic books, electronic journals, CDROM databases, OPAC, online databases and the Internet have launched the world into an information age.

Conclusion and Recommendations

One can therefore conclude that since students' use of e-resources in higher institutions is high in Niger State, it is necessary that the management of the university libraries such as FUT, Minna and IBBU Lapai should strive to have sufficient and adequate e-resources as this will encourage library users to visit and use these resources to satisfy their information needs. This is important because the advent of e-resources in academic libraries has not only radically transformed the way information search is handled in most libraries today, but has also greatly improved the quality and quantity of information used by the library users. Availability of and access to e-resources in academic libraries are important factors towards undergraduate students' optimal use of their libraries in achieving their academic pursuits.

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

1. There is need for university authorities to provide stable network services that would enhance the use of e-resources in the libraries.

2. There should be a regulatory body governing the implementation of electronic library services in Nigerian libraries which will as a matter of necessity enforce the usage of electronic resources in all institutions of higher

learning.

3. Alternative power supply should be put in place by the library management in order to ensure steady and continuous access to available e-resources by the researchers. This could be an uninterruptible power supply or a generating set.

4. Competent manpower should be employed in the libraries by the library management to cater for the library activities especially in the area of ICT usage, in order to ensure easy running of the library services.

5. There is need for provision of adequate fund by the university authority to enable the libraries acquire sufficient number of ICT facilities, as well as equip the libraries and ensure proper maintenance of the facilities such as e-resources for effective utilisation of the libraries.

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