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Access to and Use of Digital Information Resources and Research Output of Academic Staff in Federal University Libraries in Northern Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated access, use and research output of academic staff in federal university libraries in Northern Nigeria. Two null hypotheses were formulated. Descriptive survey research was adopted with the target population of 12691 respondents (ICT staff and lecturers) in federal university libraries in Northern Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select 386 respondents from nine universities. Questionnaire and observation checklist were the data collection instruments used for the study. Out of 456 copies of filled and returned in usable form. Chi-square was used to test the two null hypotheses. Results showed significant influence of preservation techniques adopted and the use of digital resources on research output. On the other hand, there was significant influence of access to digital resources on research output of academic staff. The study concluded that research output of academic staff depends on the adoption of preservation techniques and use of digital resources in the studied university libraries. The study recommended that preservation techniques utilized for conservation of digital resources by ICT units should be sustained and access to digital resources and use by academic staff in the university libraries in Northern Nigerian should be sustained as well so as to promote research output of lecturers.

Keywords: Access, Digital information, Libraries, Northern Nigeria, Research Output,

Introduction

Research output are product of research that are published/presented legitimately, found worthy for academic purposes and not limited to seminar papers, journal articles, conference proceedings, books, chapters in books, theses, dissertation, and projects. Tertiary institutional based library subscribes to numerous types of research output to facilitate current and anticipated future research activities. The status of research output is promoted by academic libraries as they make accessible, retrievable and storable these subscribed resources for teaching, learning and research (Mohammed, 2017).

Research is of great importance to national development of a nation. Research is meant for the purpose of affecting societal development and improvement. It is a way of acquiring functional, dependable and useful information and data about a particular object of research. Ochia and Omofonmwan (2013) while stressing the perceived importance of research, stated that research has an impact that transcends all spheres of human endeavour such as social, economic, political, educational, science and technology. Research is a purveyor of growth, development and industrialization. The messages and the suggestions made in research output create job opportunities, increased income, increased production of goods and services, create wealth, improved quality of life, improved transportation and communication system, networking the regions of the world, clustering of people and creating interactions among nations, socially, economically and politically.

Access to information is important because except an information source is made accessible to users, it cannot be used. Jimba and Atinmo (2002) maintain that accessibility is about being able to use what is available when it is required. Accessibility of information materials is one of the prerequisites of information utilization. Resources may be available in the library and even identified bibliographically as relevant to one's subject of interest, but the user may not be able to lay hands on them because of accessibility problems. Ugah (2008) in Salihu (2021) opined that the more accessible information sources are, the more likely they are to be used and readers tend to use information sources that require the least effort to access. Obviously, accessibility constraints that could be experienced in the use of EIR include: inadequate provision of infrastructure, Internet connection problem, online database subscription problem, library electronic resources use policy and indifference behaviour of staff towards assisting users. Accessibility of information sources is an important recurring theme in the literature. According to Aguolu and Aguolu (2012) in Salihu (2021), resources may be available in the library and even identified bibliographically as relevant to one's subject of interest, but the user may not be able to lay hands on them.

Digital resources use for academic and non-academic purposes is dependent on access and retrieval tools. Access tools according to Udofot (2019) include: catalogues, indexes, bibliographies, guides, abstracts and databases in computerized formats. The philosophy behind preservation of information resources is to prolong the life of useful research information resources. Miller and Rope (2009) stated that preservation include providing suitable storage environment and step handling procedures of information resources. According to Aliyu, (2014) preservation is the act of maintaining, protecting or keeping something in existence while on the other hand, utilization is the primary method by which asset performance is measured and success determined. (Ibenne, 2006). Utilization is the practical and maximum use of library resources identified and acquired by the user for the purpose of solving problem or achieving goals. Digital information resources according to IGI Global Disseminators of knowledge(2017) is information available in electronic format such as databases, journals, newspapers, theses, conferences, dissertation, technical reports and research papers in digital format.

The adaptation of information and communication technologies (ICT) has revolutionized the conduct of business and has greatly enhanced information accessibility. In particular, most organizations and libraries are now not only able to store large amount of information but also have quick access to it at any given time as the need arise. Preservation is so great to its continuity in order to ensure the function and benefits of the institutional repository. Hussein (2007) asserted that digital preservation is the process and activities which stabilize and protect digital records and publications in forms which are retrievable, readable and useable overtime. Digital preservation assures continued access to information.

Universities in Nigeria are established to provide solutions to topical problems, undertake researches, produce human resources with competent technical know-how and befitting workforce. The objectives of the establishment of universities are not limited to teaching, learning, research and community services because it is also looked upon for the advancement of science, technology, social, political and environmental well-being of a country. Libraries attached to universities therefore, perform functions that are directly linked to the objectives of the universities and their research output. There are obvious challenges to effectively and efficiently operate university libraries. The challenges include changes as a result of modern era which brought with it technologies that oppose the traditional methods. Modern technology also

changed the ways university libraries acquire, process, organise, disseminate, retrieve and more importantly preserve their collections.

Literature Review

Nnadozie (2017) investigated the accessibility of e-resources and online information services provided at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike (MOUUAU) and National Root Crop Research Institute (NRCRI), Umudike libraries in Abia State, Nigeria. Six research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. The research design used was descriptive survey method while useful data were elicited through a customized research instrument entitled. "Questionnaire on Availability and Accessibility of e-Resources and e-Services in Academic and Special libraries." The finding showed that while availability of e-resources was sporadic, accessibility and frequency of use of online information services were abysmally low. Several factors were identified as impeding accessibility of e-platforms in the libraries surveyed such as inadequate ICT facilities, slow bandwidth, poor funding and high cost of Internet subscription. In a research work conducted by Dada (2016) to assess the preservation of information resources in Federal College of Education (FCE), Zaria, found that preservation of information resources in the College Library is affected by lack of suitable or adequate equipment and lack of knowledge of preservation technique application on the part of the college librarians.

Ndakalu (2014) conducted a study on the accessibility and utilisation of digital information services in academic library university of Nairobi as a case study. The aim of the study was to assess the extent of accessibility and utilization of digital information services in academic libraries in Kenya with reference to University of Nairobi Library. The objectives of the study were to assess the accessibility and utilisation of digital information resources in the University of Nairobi library, establish the level of awareness of digital information services in the library, identify the challenges facing the library users in relation to accessibility and utilisation of digital information services in the library and suggest possible solutions to the identified problems in the library. The study used descriptive survey design where the target population comprised 96 postgraduate students of the University of Nairobi. Purposive sampling technique was applied to the study and questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. The findings of the study showed that the majority of the respondent rarely approached the librarians for assistance in the library and the majority of them were not aware of digital information services. The major challenges the library users faced while accessing and using digital information were lack of adequate information skills, lack of awareness, training and poor information infrastructure. Recommendations were made to include the following: provision of Internet facilities, regular library orientation for both staff and students, training of library staff on ICT skills and provision of power supply.

Saka, Abbas and Salmanu (2017) conducted a study to determine the management of research output in respect of undergraduate and postgraduate students university libraries in Kenya and Nigeria. Five research questions guided the study and contained variables such as programme covered format of submission methods of processing, arrangement and organisation as well as methods of preserving and challenges involved in the management of research output. Survey research was used with six universities in the capital cities of Kenya and Nigeria and six university librarians. Questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Data collected for this study were analysed using frequency distribution and percentage. Results showed that research output were acquired and submitted to university libraries in both hard and soft copies.

Preservation strategies were mostly through shelving and computerisation of collections. A major challenge to the management of research output was space.

Kwazo (2014) studied access to the use of library resources by sandwich diploma students of the College of Agriculture and Consumer Sciences, University of Ghana, Legon. Four objectives and three hypothesis are formulated for the study. Three hundred and twelve of the 312 students enrolled for the program. Research instrument used was questionnaires. The data was analysed using the SPSS version 16. The findings showed that about 74% of the students used campus library facilities when on campus. Majority (70.7%) used the college library more than any other library on campus. The main reason for using the library was to find a quiet place to study. This was followed by the use of the internet. The results further revealed that the students did not receive any library orientation or user education. As a result majority (59%) of the respondents found it difficult using the library. With regard to improving services they received, they stated provision of more computers, provision of user education, acquisition of more current books, and extension of opening hours in the evening. This study has shown that sandwich students of the University of Ghana, Legon, as place to study and also use the library resources and facilities. However, generally, they do not receive the necessary orientation to facilitate efficient use of the library facilities and resources. In addition, for lack of orientation, they did not have information on other libraries on campus and therefore depended mainly on the college library. Though most students have adequate knowledge of ICTs which is a great asset, there were others requiring further exposure to enhance their use of available facilities.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the access to and use of research output of academic staff in federal university libraries in Northern Nigeria

Null Hypothesis

- Ho₁: There is no significant influence of the preservation techniques adopted and the use of digital resources on research outputs of academic staff in university libraries in Northern Nigeria.
- Ho₂: Access to digital resources and use by academic staff does not significantly influence research output of academic staff in federal university libraries in Northern Nigeria.

Methodology

Descriptive survey design was used and population consisted of 12,691 respondents with a breakdown of 161 librarians in ICT unit and 12,530 lecturers in 22 Federal Universities in Northern Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select nine (9) universities, using stratified sampling technique while proportionate stratified sampling was used to select 377 lecturers and 79 ICT librarians. The researchers used two sets of questionnaires to collect quantitative data and response rate showed 321 lecturers and 65 librarians in ICT unit in nine Federal Universities in Northern Nigeria. Mean and standard deviation was used to analyses data to further test the null hypotheses using chi square as inferential statistical tool.

Results and Discussion

Hypothesis 1 Ho₁: There is no significant influence of the preservation techniques adopted and the use of digital resources on research outputs of academic staff in university libraries in Northern Nigeria.

Test of Null Hypothesis

Testing of hypotheses with Chi-square (X^2) statistics

Null hypothesis One: There is no significant influence of the preservation techniques adopted and the use of digital resources on research outputs of academic staff in university libraries in Northern Nigeria.

Table 1: Chi square (X^2) statistics on influence of the preservation techniques adopted and the use of digital resources on research outputs of academic staff in university libraries in Northern Nigeria.

Variable	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Df	X^2 computed	X^2 critical	P
preservation techniques adopted and the use of digital resources on research outputs	23	35	2	5	65	18	40.814	28.869	0.002
	15.88	25.71	10.43	13.00					

$P < 0.05$, X^2 computed $>$ X^2 critical at df 18

$p = 0.002$, X^2 computed = 40.814, X^2 critical = 28.869

Results of the above Chi square (X^2) statistics revealed that the preservation techniques adopted has significant influence on the use of digital resources on research outputs of academic staff in university libraries in Northern Nigeria.

Reasons being that the computed X^2 value of 40.814 is greater than the X^2 critical value of 28.869 at df 18 and the calculated p value of 0.002 is below the 0.05. This implies that preservation techniques adopted has significant influence on the use of digital resources on research outputs of academic staff in university libraries in Northern Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis which state that there is no significant influence of the preservation techniques adopted and the use of digital resources on research outputs of academic staff in university libraries in Northern Nigeria is hereby rejected. The findings collaborated Kay (2017) from a study on backup digital preservation practice with empirical research reported that the relationship between preservation and accessibility to digital information resources was found to be significant.

Null hypothesis Two: Access to digital resources and use by academic staff does not significantly influence research output of academic staff in federal university libraries in Northern Nigeria.

Table 2: Chi square (X^2) statistics on influence of Access to digital resources and the research output of academic staff in federal university libraries in Northern Nigeria.

Variable	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Df	X^2 computed	X^2 critical	P
Access to digital resources and the research output	15	28	12	10	65	18	31.208	28.869	0.013
	13.37	28.24	11.0	10.83					

$P < 0.05$, X^2 computed $>$ X^2 critical at df 18

$p = 0.002$, X^2 computed = 40.814, X^2 critical = 28.869

Results of the above Chi square (X^2) statistics revealed that the Access to digital resources has significant influence the research output of academic staff in federal university libraries in Northern Nigeria.

Reasons being that the computed X^2 value of 31.208 is greater than the X^2 critical value of 28.869 at df 18 and the calculated p value of 0.013 is below the 0.05. This implies that access to digital resources has significant influence on the research output of academic staff in federal university libraries in Northern Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis which state that access to digital resources and use by academic staff does not significantly influence research output of academic staff in federal university libraries in Northern Nigeria, is hereby rejected. The findings agrees with Ndakalu (2014) from a study on access and use of digital information services in academic libraries, a case study of University of Nairobi reported that access to digital information have significant influence on research output of users of libraries and that majority of users rarely approached the librarians for assistance in the library and that most were not aware of digital information services.

Conclusions

In line with the findings made, the researchers conclude that the use of digital resources have significant influences on research output academics in the selected Federal university libraries in Northern Nigeria. The result signifies that research output of academic staff depends on the adoption of preservation techniques and use of digital resources.

Recommendations

Based on the findings from the analysed data, the researcher would want to recommend as follows:

1. Preservation techniques utilized for conservation of digital resources by ICT units should be sustained.
2. Access to digital resources and use by academic staff in the university libraries in Northern Nigerian should be sustained to promote research output of lecturers.

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