

ACCESSIBILITY AND USE OF ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES TO ENRICH TEACHING AND LEARNING IN LIBRARY SCHOOLS IN POLYTECHNICS IN NIGERIA: PATHWAY TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

The introduction of information and communications technology (ICT) has hastened accessibility and use of electronic information resources in recent time. This universal development has posed serious challenges to library and information science institutions in their attempt to meet the requirements of the job market and satisfy the information needs of users in the digital age. As stated by Popoola (2005), there is a great demand for the services of information management professionals in Nigeria. Meaning that, there are challenges for library and information science professionals ever than before in the information industry. This assertion was corroborated by Dhiman (2010), when he opined that, the librarians' role is changing day-by-day and to serve as information literacy trainers as well as experts in organising and providing access to online resources, they are expected to be at the forefront of information provision. That is, they must be knowledgeable to provide these services and this can only be a reality if librarians are information rich enough and are familiar with information and communications technologies.

Tenopir (2003) defined library and information science as a discipline that deals with how information is transferred from the point of generation to the point of use and all the intermediate steps of sorting, collecting, organising, interpreting, storing, retrieving, disseminating and transforming information. As a discipline, it stresses the application of ICT to the handling of information. Therefore, for a meaningful national development, efforts should be geared towards accessibility and use of electronic information resources for problem solving, planning, decision-making and control. Suffice to say that, right from school, librarians

need to learn how to rely heavily on the use of electronic information resources especially for their job and academic works.

The developed nations of the world are far ahead of developing countries in terms of ICT. Concerted efforts must be mustered by the Sub-Saharan countries to bridge the digital divide that is preventing them from exploiting full benefits of the electronic technology. For any nation to grow, education is known to be the greatest instrument that can be used to develop its economic, political, sociological, technological and human resources. It also remains a critical transformation tool and a formidable instrument for socio-economic empowerment of the citizenry. Furthermore, achieving Nigeria's aspiration of becoming one of the major economic players in the year 2020, depends largely on the quality of the nation's human capital development and the capacity to improve productivity and efficiency at individual and corporate levels. According to Udoudoh (2009), development is a process of change. National development could therefore be seen as the process of a nation becoming larger, stronger, more impressive, successful and advanced in all ramifications.

The Federal Government of Nigeria in realisation of the impact and power of technology in national development, and its efforts to join the technologically advanced nations of the world, has decided to educate its citizens on the use of qualitative information sources and resources to revitalize, reposition, rehabilitate, restore and improve technical and vocational education in Nigeria. According to Na'iyi (2013), one of the measures adopted by the federal government to achieve this objective was the provision of funds for polytechnic libraries to procure instructional and learning materials in federal polytechnics in Nigeria through the establishment of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund).

According to Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) (2004), its vision is to use funds generated from education tax to improve the standard and quality of education in Nigeria. Also, lecturers in these institutions are to be better equipped for research and teaching. One of the corporate goals of TETFund is to plan, undertake research and create reliable databank for improvement of education in Nigeria. But most importantly and among other matters, TETFund is to provide funds to higher education libraries to procure learning materials to stimulate, support, enrich, rejuvenate and restructure education in Nigeria. This is known as education rebirth. Therefore, one of the ways by which TETFund achieved its aims and objectives at the tertiary institutions in Nigeria, most especially in the nation's polytechnics and monotechnics, was the provision of electronic information resources to the polytechnic students and their instructors. The justification for the provision was borne out of the desire to provide up-to-date learning resources to the polytechnic sector and empower the citizens educationally.

As observed by Isah (2010), the efforts by the Federal Government of Nigeria to provide electronic information resources have not yielded enough results. The institutions are yet to harness the opportunities provided by these initiatives, due to factors such as inaccessibility of electronic information resources and where accessible, lack of technical skills required to navigate the modern technology on the part of the users and library staff. Also, potential users of these new information resources are not making adequate use of the resources owing to lack of awareness on their availability and value in educational development. Corroborating this assertion, Abdullah & Gibb (2006) noted that, considerable number of students and staff are unaware of the existence of e-resources in polytechnic libraries and that they are not willing to discover and use them more effectively. This may be due to ignorance, apathy and varying institutional policies regarding subscription or use policy of the institution library. Also, unfriendly interfaces or usability problems tend to hinder their further use of electronic information resources.

In educational institutions, especially higher institutions like the polytechnics, the mode of delivery of knowledge and curriculum are not yet ICT enhanced, even with the development of a national policy on ICT in education. A development that is worrisome. To arrest the situation for good, and in realisation of the importance of education in Nigeria, a National Policy on Education (NPE) was formulated for the country. Relevant portion states that 'education in Nigeria is an instrument par excellence for effecting national development'. The policy also seeks the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity, the inculcation of right type of values and attitudes in individuals and the society, the training of the human mind in understanding of the world: and acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies, both mental and physical, as equipment for an individual to live in and contribute to the development of her society (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004).

As stated by Dike (1993), the felt need to improve higher education should begin with giving greater attention to our students. Okegbile (2007) described students in higher education institutions as leaders of tomorrow, who are expected to further develop the nation and take Nigeria to an enviable height. They are also believed to be the ones to build and develop the society's technological education from the foundation. Therefore, mere provision of electronic information resources to students and lecturers in polytechnics in Nigeria is not enough but, provision of access to them will help students achieve the expected learning outcome that will aid responses to global environmental changes. They have academic success as their major goal, and for this goal to be achieved, it requires dedication, sacrifice, self-discipline, motivation and cordial relationship among

students, lecturers, learning resources and methods. In some instances, it is observed that students and staff use a single source of information (print as against electronic) to teach and learn which ultimately makes their academic work and assignments to be stereotyped, shallow, unimpressive and thin. Again, it was noticed that students hardly seek for assistance or guide on how to use ready and relevant electronic information resources around them. Rather, they rely more on printed information resources found physically around them. They therefore pass on assignments and write-ups using the same expression, language, and reference sources. This measure eventually waters down the quality of their academic and research works.

Although, the polytechnic students are not to be blamed solely for these systemic lapses because, they are faced with some challenges such as poor study habits, unavailability of information sources and resources, and where available, limited access to a variety of information in stored data, poor teaching methods and information utilisation pattern. In addition, the present information explosion age has equally placed unimagined scholarly responsibilities on students and their trainers especially those in polytechnics. To minimise academic atrophy by the trainers and the trainees in library schools therefore, there must be a relationship between the curriculum, teaching and learning methods and instructional medium. It is in the light of this that this paper intends to discuss the influence of accessibility and use of electronic information resources in enriching teaching and learning in library schools in polytechnics in Nigeria.

Electronic Information Resources (EIRs)

Singh and Jindal (2009) described electronic information resources (EIR) as information resources that are found and can be accessed electronically through computer network facilities such as online library catalogues, the Internet, the World Wide Web and digital libraries. EIRs have increasingly become an invaluable asset in education, research, teaching and learning. They have the capability to transform the conduct of research and teaching in higher institutions of learning by allowing staff and students a wide range of opportunities for accessing accurate and timely information on various subjects. The use of electronic information resources enables lecturers and students to effectively and efficiently access digital information to assist them to investigate and solve problems, make decisions, find creative solutions to support learning and develop new understanding in areas of learning and teaching (Aramide and Bello, 2010). With the use of electronic information resources, information searchers can have access to current and up-to-date information on various subjects and also assist in developing learning skills and high order thinking.

Accessibility and use of electronic information resources

There are so many factors that could facilitate access and influence the use of electronic information resources by staff and students in polytechnics in Nigeria. Among such factors are: computer-literacy, attitude and awareness. In developed countries of the world, literature has revealed an increased use of electronic information resources among students, but it has been observed that inaccessibility to electronic databases has become a major impediment to usage of databases by students in low income countries, especially those in Sub-Saharan Africa (Oliver, 2013).

Esse (2014) in a study conducted on students' attitude to the use of e-resources in Bell University, Sango Ota, Nigeria found out that, students from the faculties of social science, arts, science, technology and engineering recorded low use of electronic information resources. According to the researcher, this could be due to a number of factors such as lack of awareness on the efficacy of electronic information resources in learning, lack of awareness of its availability, lack of awareness of its relevance and value to their studies, lack of time to access and too many passwords to remember among others. Similarly, Esse (2014) opines that, appropriate use of ICT has a way of revolutionising teaching, learning and research in the global community of information users. She added that, students should no longer be restricted to print materials alone to solve their information needs. Manda (2005) also studied the use of electronic resources by faculty staff members in Tanzania. He discovered that use was low due to inadequate end-user training, poor internet connectivity, limited access to personal computers and poor search skills.

Benefits derivable from the use of electronic information resources

Intelligent application of technology in learning has a significant impact on attainment and overall learning outcomes to achieve educational development for this nation. Also, there could be positive academic change in all ramifications emanating from access to, and use of these new and emerging technologies. In addition, learning about emerging models and roles that meet changing demands of end-users, and learning about stimulating the imagination and creativity of learners are also derivable with the use of electronic resources in library schools. To librarians, learning about how they must prepare for the future challenges is one important benefit derivable from the use of electronic resources as well as learning about new skills and transformative ideas. Again, the inculcation of electronic resources in learning is also expected to help library professionals to thrive and impact positively on the community. Furthermore, access to and use of electronic resources by librarians would enable them provide assistance to staff and students in completing course works, provision of assistance in preparing for

examinations, provision of assistance in lecture preparation and presentation and provision of access to assorted e-resources that are beneficial to all.

According to Waldman (2003), advantages of EIR to staff and students in tertiary institutions include; unrestricted access to information resources, effective electronic learning, use of various media anywhere, anytime, and any way. In addition, electronic information resources serve as a motivating factor to users because, they provide them the opportunity to transmit, acquire, download and disseminate information on various subjects. To Adeyemi (2009), electronic information resources greatly increase access to information. Also, Brophy (1993) stated that, the advantages of electronic resources include; high speed, ease of use and ease of reach to unlimited number of students as well as their lecturers virtually and simultaneously. It also permits ability to search multiple files at the same time. Furthermore, it promotes ability to save, print and repeat searches more frequently. EIR is easily used for updating knowledge and its ability to access information from within and outside the library is an added advantage. For scholars to achieve high scholastic standing, the benefits of electronic resources use for educational purposes must be explored.

Points of access to electronic information resources

Yuen & Majid (2007) stated that, electronic information resource is a kind of media mix that opens new avenues of learning and knowledge sharing to tertiary institution students. Thus, students and lecturers must have access to these vital research and recreational tools so as to function as change agent in the society. Most importantly, the point of access is through the polytechnic library and guidance from library personnel. This is one reason why the Federal Government has sponsored an intervention programme through Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFund) to provide instructional materials to polytechnic community so as to revitalise, rejuvenate, improve and restructure education in Nigeria. Other access points include: guidance from fellow lecturers; guidance from fellow students; cyber café; mobile devices; internet sources provided by the polytechnics management; and modem.

Knowledge classification and commonly used electronic information resources in librarianship

Man is a creature of intellectual curiosity, and the urge to learn has driven human beings into seeking various kinds of knowledge. This knowledge is required for human resources development. Librarians are in the fore front of this information seeking behaviour because they need information themselves and

also need to be adequately equipped in order to perform their duty intelligently, conscientiously, effectively and efficiently. In this regard, knowledge in librarianship can be classified into four categories namely; academic, social, spiritual and recreational.

Academic knowledge is that education which is required in polytechnics to turn technological education around. It also involves an acquaintance with facts, truths, and principles injected into education industry arising from study or investigation. Academic knowledge is required to sort and sieve relevant and current information from the several millions of information resources available globally. The acquisition of relevant knowledge according to Popoola (2005), has afforded librarians to scan, select, acquire, process, store, retrieve, communicate and disseminate information in whatever form it may take, unconstrained by distance, time and volume. This, he concluded, will improve library and information services in Nigeria and turn the nation's education around positively. Electronic information resources required to achieve this objective include materials such as; e-reference resources, e-books, e-journals, e-technical reports, e-theses and so on.

Social knowledge is needed for information managers to function as responsible individuals, and it starts from infancy. It teaches a person how to behave in a given situation. Man does not need to behave like animal in a world of human beings. One example of social knowledge is a simple table manner. Also, social knowledge is devoted to or is characterized by friendly companionship or relations. It is a social instrument of communications supporting the democratisation of knowledge and information and can transform people from content consumers to content producers. According to Alonge (2011), social knowledge uses web-based technologies to transform and broadcast media monologues into social media dialogues. Examples of electronic information resources required for social knowledge include; Blogs, Twitters, LinkedIn, Facebook and the likes.

To librarians as professionals and prospective users, spiritual knowledge is needed to cater for their spiritual or divine needs. Spiritual knowledge could eventually lead man to spiritualism and bring man closer to God. Also, as information providers, to be knowledgeable in any aspect of human endeavours will be a great asset. Electronic information resources such as devotional materials needed to be provided for users who might demand such include: e-Bible, e-Quran, e-commentary, e-hadith and so on.

Recreational knowledge contains current but soft information for entertainment and leisure reading purposes. The materials take boredom out of tired librarians and enliven a dispirited mind. Librarians need these information

resources to keep them alive, current and active to happenings around them. Examples of resources needed to gain recreational knowledge include; electronic magazines (e-zines), e-newspaper, sporting news, cable news and so many others. Information in Table 1 gives examples of classified electronic information resources required by librarians and trainees in polytechnics in Nigeria.

Table 1: **Classification of knowledge in librarianship and electronic information resources**

S/N	Knowledge class	Information Resources
1.	Academic knowledge	<u>Online bibliographic databases</u> Greenstone, EBSCOHOST, ScienceDirect, Library and Information Science Abstract(LISA), Nigerian Virtual Library, Journalstore (JSTOR), Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), Digital Libraries, E-books, E-reference (e-dictionary, e-encyclopaedia, ask-the-librarian), Newsgroup, e-directories, Digitised theses and dissertations.
		<u>Web 2.0</u> Webiner or Webseminar, Wikis, videoconferences, Google plus, E-mail, Teleconferencing, VoIP, Http, URL, File Transfer Protocol (FTP),
		<u>Geographical information System</u> Geographical Information Sources (Google earth, e-map, e-atlas, e-gazetteer),
2.	Social knowledge	<u>Social Media</u> Twitter, Facebook, FlickrR, YouTube, Weblogs, e-mail, 2go, Skype, LinkedIn, Myspace, myNetSpot, Study Breaker, myGamma-myWorld, (Digital photos can be shared using Picasa. Polls, surveys, asking/answering questions, commenting on information on Internet. Searching and watching videos/news clips/interview on YouTube. Information can also be shared via the phones or Twitter).
3	Spiritual knowledge	Mp3s, e-Bible, e-Qur'an, e-Commentaries, e-Hadith Electronic Religion Dictionaries, Religion Encyclopaedias), e-Concordance, Online Apocrypha.
4.	Recreational knowledge	Electronic magazines (e-zine), E-newspapers, Sporting News (contains articles, current but soft information) Business News etc.

Source: Field survey 2014

Barriers to access and use of electronic information resources

The effective use of electronic information resources is bedevilled by a number of factors. The peculiar problems associated with electronic media in teaching and learning are enormous as learners see the electronic media as a somewhat troublesome technology because of the nature and the requirement of electricity to use the gadgets. Also, learners as well as lecturers may lack the skills required for utilising such electronic information resources. Furthermore, Gambari & Adaeze (2007) pointed out the problem of budget cut which has been adduced for inadequacy of electronic media resources in academic institutions.

In Oketunji's (1999) view, many students may not even be aware of the capability of electronic information resources in educational transformation. Therefore, the decision to use electronic information resources for decision making by students and lecturers in the polytechnics could be determined by factors such as physical availability and accessibility to information resources. Due to the reforms in education sector in this 21st Century and due to the introduction and integration of ICT in education system, accessibility and use of these educational resources are inevitable. Knowledge keeps expanding, and so the right to information is required, especially through wide reading and assimilation. This is to say that, the quality of life can be measured by the amount of relevant information available, accessed and used by a person to better his academic life.

On the barriers to access and use of electronic resources, Mabawonku (2004) reported that, most library resources are in poor state, overstretched and inadequate in providing for the needs of research staff and students. This makes it uneasy for service providers to provide the range of services and materials needed to support higher education. Some challenges militating against satisfaction of the information needs of librarians and trainees in library schools in Nigeria are: high cost of internet browsing; inadequate ICT skills; poor and epileptic power supply; low and inadequate bandwidth; restricted access to e-library in most polytechnics; unavailability of internet facilities on campus; inadequate resources in the academic library; paucity of funds; apathy and ignorance among others.

Conclusion

In conclusion, access and use of electronic information resources are vital to the information profession as the two concepts share a symbiotic relationship. In this age of globalisation and search for national development, students and lecturers must be acquainted with the sources or avenues of these electronic information resources as this will encourage the use of information sources and resources available. Not only should information be a critical denominator to all

library processes, but it must be accessible both physically and digitally in order to be of instrumental value to the very busy library and information professionals. It is therefore vital that, individuals in the library profession must contribute to every aspect of national and professional development. More so, in the current stage of information development, a blend of the conventional and technological approaches is definitely a marriage with a common destiny.

The way forward

To overcome the problems of inaccessibility and low use of electronic information resources, the following strategies are suggested.

The Federal Government of Nigeria should come out with workable measures aimed at lowering the prohibitive cost of bandwidth as well as other ICT related facilities. For example, current prohibitive import duties on computer hardware and software need to be reduced in order to make them affordable by students and lecturers.

The National Board for Technical Education should come out with more pragmatic measures aimed at reviving polytechnic education in Nigeria. Measures must also be taken to ensure functional network to facilitate students' access to, and use of electronic information resources regularly.

The Nigerian Library Association (NLA) and the Librarian Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN), the two professional bodies saddled with the responsibility of growing, nurturing and monitoring librarianship in Nigeria can as well help in making the various stakeholders see reasons and needs to have functional ICT compliant academic libraries in all polytechnics in Nigeria.

The issue of epileptic power supply should be addressed by the stakeholders so that distribution and generation of power can be improved upon. To compliment the national grid, the polytechnic management should acquire additional power generating plants as well as inverters and solar energy so as to provide electricity back-up needed for functional electronic information resources.

Efforts should be geared towards the inculcation of information and communications technology (ICT) into the polytechnic curriculum. It is believed that this will help ICTs literacy and search skills of students and researchers as well. Worthy of note is that, the federal government has taken steps in training civil servants on the introduction to computer studies through 'Advance Digital Appreciation Programme for Tertiary Institutions (ADAPTI) programme by Digital Bridge Institute, Abuja. The objective is to train employees on how to understand the terminology and uses of information technology and make

government employees to be ICT complaint. The training should be made open to all.

There should be constant and sustained orientation and awareness campaign on the part of academic libraries to enlighten the trainers and the trainees in the nation's polytechnics, the imperative of using electronic information resources for teaching and learning. Also, to notify them of newly acquired materials or available resources, provide access to these resources and make them free round-the-clock with provision of remote accessibility to guarantee and facilitate usage in all ramifications.

The federal government should continue unrelentingly to provide funds for the provision of electronic information resources so as to stimulate, support and enhance teaching and learning activities in the polytechnics in Nigeria.

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