

Awareness and Use of Electronic Resources by Academic Staff in Nigerian University Libraries: A Case Study of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Library Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the awareness and use of electronic resources by academic staff at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Library Umudike, Abia State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey was used as the design of the study. A well-structured questionnaire titled "Awareness and Use of Electronic Resources by Academics Questionnaire (AULERAQ) was used as an instrument for data collection. Data were collected from 90 academic staff of MOUAU who was randomly selected from 10 colleges. Findings revealed that a more significant percentage of the academic staff were highly aware of electronic journals, electronic books, CDROM, electronic dictionaries, electronic encyclopaedia and abstract. The study recommended that MOUAU library should intensify more efforts to increase the level of awareness of the academic staff on the available electronic resources like EBSCO host, AGORA, HINARI, OARE and JSTOR; The University Library of MOUAU should use the library staff, library tour, library guide/brochure, university website and posters distributed and pasted at strategic corners to create awareness on the availability of electronic resources.

Keywords: Academic staff, Awareness, Library Electronic Resources, University

Introduction

Knowledge and information environments all over the world are increasingly facing a dynamic and unprecedented wave of change. Technology, according to Abinew & Vuda (2013), has increased the global dissemination of information. There are more substantial volumes of information than ever before, new ways of collecting information, new means of preserving information, new tools for accessing information, and new ways of disseminating information. This change has been as a result of information and communication technologies (ICTs). Information and communication technologies are technological devices utilized by institutions, organizations, teachers, and students in handling and communicating information. Such devices include a computer (hardware and software), networking, telephone, mobile phones, videos, multi-media, and the Internet.

These technologies have impacted tremendously on the educational system. ICTs have become educational tools that facilitate distance learning, student-centered learning, supportive knowledge construction, supportive basic education, supportive constructivist learning, and promotion of active learning. New

ideological concepts, methods, and processes have also emerged, giving teaching and learning a lift from its traditional standpoint. The use of ICT means breaking with conventional media, boards, pens, etc., and it has given way to a teaching role based on the need for training in and updating one's knowledge of teaching methods based on current requirements (Granados, 2015). The ideas of teaching construction and the way one can build and consolidate meaningful learning based on technology are now being discussed in strictly pedagogical terms (Díaz-Barriga, 2013). Interestingly, these changes are transformational in education.

The transformation of ICT has allowed these to become educational tools that could further improve the educational quality of the student and revolutionize the way information is obtained, managed, and interpreted (Aguilar, 2012). In a similar opinion, Zipphorah (2014) stated that the adoption of ICT in education had been seen as a powerful way to contribute to educational change, better prepare students for the information age, and improve learning outcomes and competencies of learners. The tools also equip students with survival skills for the information society. Students now participate as new educational agents in the new information environment. This transformation also influences their scholarly attitude, ideology, and perceptions, which, in turn, affect the way they interact, communicate, and study in this new environment.

Also, contemporarily, ICT is providing real opportunities for individualized learning approaches, scientific research by teachers and students. Teaching and learning technologies have transformed the process of instruction from the traditional teacher-centered passive mode of teaching where the teacher prepares and presents the course materials to the student, into a more active and interactive one where students explore and create their understanding (Funderstanding, 2011). ICT has undoubtedly enhanced the quality and quantity of teaching, learning, and research through its dynamic and engaging content. Thus, the integration of ICT into education has become a process whose implications go far beyond the technological tools nurturing the educational environment. In terms of form and content, it has had a massive and multiplying effect, to such an extent that the purpose of knowledge has come to permeate the wider society, with education being among the broadest implications and developments brought thereby (Hernandez, 2017). ICT has become a new path through which academics disseminate their research findings and reports.

Now, libraries being the reservoir of information have been affected by these waves of technological changes in the educational environment. A library is the physical collection of books and others electronic information materials contained in it. Adebayo (2012) stated that the mission of a library is to provide timely, accurate, current, and reliable information to its users. In fulfilling this mission, libraries select, collect, organizes, preserve, and disseminates information via various information sources for users satisfaction. In addition to maintaining collections within library buildings, modern libraries often feature telecommunications links that provide users with access to information at remote

sites (Dhanavandan, 2015). Information and communication technologies have also caused changes in library operations, creating better ways of handling and disseminating information to their clientele. The inclusion of ICT in libraries means that libraries need to adopt electronic library resources to supplement their traditional roles and services. This infusion will enable them to maintain their relevance in the face of technologies. However, when such resources are available in libraries and users are not aware of their existence for utilization, it then becomes a waste of resources having them.

Problem Statement

The philosophy of librarianship is based on the concept of library service and the provision of relevant materials to users. Academic libraries and information professionals in an ongoing effort are trying to understand the evolving factors that will complement scholarly research of academics wherever they are. Authors such as (Okiki and Asiru, 2011) have reported that several academic libraries spend millions of dollars a year on e-resources to achieve this process. Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike library joining this electronic bandwagon subscribe to electronic library resources to support teaching, learning, and research.

However, it has been observed that most of these resources remain underutilized in the library. Most academic staff seems not to be aware of their existence in the library. This situation has become worrisome in the sense that these library electronic resources are veritable educational tools for teaching, learning, and research. In their content also lie lots of current information and research ideas. These resources are being made available by different professionals from different areas of disciplines as teaching, learning, and research aids. Thus, this study is here to investigate the awareness and use of electronic library resources by academic staff at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike Abia State, Nigeria.

Objectives

This study seeks to:

1. ascertain the level of awareness of the existing electronic library resources by academic staff in MOUAU
2. identify the sources through which academic staff get this awareness in MOUAU
3. identify the perceived constraints to the use of electronic resources in MOUAU library
4. suggest strategies for enhancing these constraints

Literature Review

According to Okiki and Asiru, (2011), the electronic resource is information stored and transmitted in digital, automated, or computerized formats. Similarly, Johnson, Evensen, Gelfand, Lammers, Sipe, and Zilper (2012) assert that they are the electronic representation of information that can be accessed via the automated

system and computer network. They further explained that electronic information sources can be seen as the most recent development in information technology and that they are available in various forms.

Library electronic resources include e-journals, e-books, Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD-ROMs), Electronic journals, OPACs, WEBPACs, and online databases. Other electronic resources Online Research in the Environment (OARE), Journal Storage (JSTOR), Health Internetwork Access to Research Initiative (HINARI) and The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library (TEEAL), Ebscohost, Oare Sciences, Virtual Library (NUC), online public access catalogue (OPAC), CD-ROMs (Compact Disc-Read Only Memory), e-books collections, e-journals are covering a variety of subjects, and significant bibliographic databases like AGORA and MEDLARS and the like. These resources have become sources of information for academics. Electronic information resources are products of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and they are relevant to the teaching, learning, and research processes in universities (Olasore and Adekunmisi, 2015).

The benefits of e-resources to libraries, teachers, and students are numerous. These resources have expanded and enhanced traditional library services and operations. In their opinion, Aregbesola and Oguntayo (2014) avail that these resources are invaluable research tools that compliment print-based resources in any traditional library. They provide access to information that might be restricted to the user because of geographical locations and finances. In the words of Ukpebor, (2012), they provide accurate and timely information, especially for students who depend significantly on the electronic resources for knowledge to advance research and collaboration with other researchers around the world for intellectual growth. These resources have gained wide acceptability among university scholars due to its convenience, multi-access capability, unrestricted access to information, ability to browse the Web, and timeliness (Bankole, Ajiboye, and Otunla, 2015). Also, Munira and Bushra (2010) stated that electronic library resources are essential research tools that complement the print-based resources in a traditional library setting. Electronic information resources provide access to information that might be restricted to the user because of distance (Sabouri et al. 2010). They also serve as aid teaching, learning, and research aids both to students and teachers. They stand as veritable tools for the academic success of teachers and students in various areas of the discipline. A study carried out by Sivathaasan, and Velnampy (2013) revealed that usage of electronic information resources has a strong positive association with academic performance ($r = 0.623$, $p < 0.01$), and it has an impact on academic achievement at the rate of 38.8 % ($R^2 = 0.388$). They are faster to be consulted than print indexes, especially when searching retrospectively, and they are straight forward when wishing to use a combination of keywords. They open up the possibility of searching multiple files at a time. Electronic information resources can be printed, searched, and saved to be repeated or consulted at a later date. They are updated more often than printed resources (Aina, 2014).

According to Prangya and Rabindra (2013), awareness, is the core usage of electronic information resources. Where materials are in closed access, users' ease of access to such e-resources is by far reduced. Presently, these electronic resources are utilized by librarians in redefining their traditional operations, as well as providing an opportunity for enhanced research and scholarship promotion in academic circles.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to find out the awareness and use of electronic library resources by academic staff at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Library Umudike, Abia State. A descriptive survey was used as the design of the study. A well-structured questionnaire titled "Awareness and Use of Library Electronic Resources by Academics Questionnaire (AULERAQ) was used as an instrument for data collection. Data were collected from 90 academic staff of MOUAU were randomly selected from 10 colleges. This formed the sampled population of the study. The selection of this population was based on their likelihood of using electronic resources is high to support teaching, learning, and research.

Findings and Discussion

The result and discussion of this study was presented below

Table 1: Level of Awareness of Electronic Resources by Academic Staff in MOUAU Library

ICTs	Frequency	Percentage
Electronic journals	13	14.44
Electronic dictionaries	10	11.11
Electronic encyclopaedia	9	10.00
Electronic abstracts	8	8.90
Electronic theses/dissertations	3	3.33
Electronic books	11	12.22
TEEAL	3	3.33
AGORA	5	5.56
AGRICOLA	1	1.11
OARE	4	4.44
EBSCOHOST	3	3.33
HINARI	5	5.56
JSTOR	4	4.44
CD-ROMs	11	12.22

****Multiple Responses***

Table 1 presents frequencies and percentages on the awareness of electronic library resources by academic staff in MOUAU with fourteen (14) items. The table revealed that a higher proportion of the academic staff was highly aware of electronic journals as it ranked highest among the electronic resources with (14.44%). Electronic books and CD-R0Ms followed this with the rate of (12.22%), electronic dictionaries with (11.11%), an electronic encyclopedia with (10.00%), electronic abstracts (8.90%), electronic theses/dissertation with the percentage of (3.33%), EBSCOhost with the rate of (3.33%), AGORA with the percentage of (5.56%), HINARI with the percentage of (5.56%), OARE and JSTOR with the percentage of (4.44%), TEEAL with the rate of (3.33%) and AGRICOLA with the percentage of (1.11%). This result implies that the majority of academic staff in MOUAU has shallow awareness of the existence of significant library electronic resources and that electronic resources in the MOUAU library are underutilized. The irony of these findings is that most of the underutilized library electronic resources are very vital in terms of academic goal achievement. MOUAU is among the agriculturally based institutions in Nigeria which need these resources by implication. Secondly, underutilization of these library resources may also go a long way in retarding academic staff knowledge in terms of current agricultural information that exists in these resources.

Table 2: Responses on Sources of Awareness of Library Electronic Resources by Academic Staff of MOUAU

S/N	Item Statements	Frequency	Percentage
1	Library Staff	7	7.78
2	University Website	8	8.89
3	Colleagues/Friends	20	22.22
4	Lecturers	10	11.11
5	Social networks	35	38.89
6	Library tour	5	5.56
7	Library guide/brochure	5	5.56
	Total	90	100

Table 2 above presents the frequency and percentage distribution of sources of awareness of electronic library resources by the academic staff of MOUAU. The table revealed that social networks with the percentage of (38.89%), colleagues/friends with the (22.22%), and lectures with the (11.11%) as the highest sources of awareness of electronic resources by academic staff of MOUAU. Other causes include Library staff, Library tour, Library guide/brochure, and university website with low percent of 7.78%, 5.56%, 5.5%, and 8.8%, respectively. This finding implies that the MOUAU library subscribes to most library electronic resources but has not utilized vital sources to create its awareness and subsequent educational benefits to academic staff in the university.

Table 3: Responses on Constraints to the Use of Library Electronic Resources by Academic staff of MOUAAU

S/N	Item Statements	Frequency	Percentage
1	Frequent power failure	19	21.11
2	Low level of ICT skills by academic staff	9	10
3	Poor Internet connectivity	20	22.22
	Difficulty in finding and downloading relevant information materials	17	18.89
5	lack of proper guidance in the use of electronic resources	10	11.11
6	Inadequate ICT facilities to access the resources	15	16.67
	Total	90	100

Table 3 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of constraints to the use of electronic library resources by the academic staff of MOUAAU. The results revealed that most of the respondents agreed that frequent power failure with the percentage of (21.11%), low level of ICT skills by academic staff with the percentage of (10%), and poor Internet connectivity the interest of (22.22%). Other challenges discovered include the difficulty in finding and downloading of relevant information materials with the rate of (18.89%), lack of proper guidance in the use of electronic resources with the percentage of (11.11%) and inadequate ICT facilities to access the resources with the rate of (16.67%) are the constraints to the use of electronic library resources in MOUAAU. From the inception of the application of ICT in Nigeria libraries, continuous power failure, low level of ICT skills, and lack of proper guidance. Other challenges encountered include inadequate ICT facilities, difficulty in downloading relevant information materials that have to remain serious factors that militate against the none utilization of ICT related information packages. These findings are in line with Igbo (2013), Aregbesola (2014), and Aina (2014). This result, therefore, implies that more need to be done in these areas.

Conclusion

Knowledge and information environments all over the world are increasingly facing a dynamic and unprecedented wave of change. There are more substantial volumes of information than ever before, new ways of collecting information, and new tools for working for information. This change has also affected educational processes spilling into libraries. For libraries to maintain their relevance and be at the cutting edge in terms of their services to their institutions, they subscribe to electronic information resources. Electronic information resources have high potentials in improving teaching, learning, and research in every institution of higher education, and those in MOUAAU are mostly agriculturally based. They assist in the provision of adequate and current information in

agricultural fields as well as other areas of the discipline. These resources are cost-effective, but this notwithstanding, the MOUAU library, as a matter of professional obligation, subscribe to them to enable effective teaching, learning, and research. This, therefore, necessitates their adequate utilization both by staff and students. However, from the study, the findings show that academics in MOUAU have low awareness of the existence of most of these library electronic resources.

Recommendations

The study, therefore, made the following recommendations:

1. MOUAU library should intensify more efforts to increase the level of awareness of the academic staff on the available electronic resources like EBSCOhost, AGORA, HINARI, OARE, and JSTOR.
2. The University Library of MOUAU should use library staff, library tour, library guide/brochure, university website, and posters distributed and pasted at strategic corners to create awareness on the availability of electronic resources.
3. MOUAU library management should liaise with the university management in the provision of constant Internet services, an alternative power supply such as inverters for solar energy and other scientific energy supply system to facilitate the utilization of

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