DIGITAL LITERACY AND THE IMPLICATION ON NIGERIAN DIGITAL LIBRARY

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ABSTRACT: *Digital libraries are emerging concepts in Nigeria, and digital literacy is a necessary tool or skill needed in making use of resources in the digital library. Most Nigerian libraries are faced with challenges in library usage and services due to inadequate literacy and digital skills required to make maximum use of digital library. This in turn has led to digital divide among both users and staff. Libraries owe it to their users, to make information accessible to all, irrespective of their locations, languages and literacy levels, as libraries support all forms of literacies from basic to digital. How then, can all these be made possible if users are not digitally literate?. The study hope to bring to light the essence of digital literacy in digital libraries, consequence of not being digital literate, and ways libraries can promote digital literacy. The study employed qualitative approach as research design. The researcher searched online journal articles, databases and looked at various studies carried on digital literacy, the importance, digital libraries, implication of digital literacy in libraries and ways libraries can promote digital literacies in their libraries with focus on Nigeria and proffered solutions for tackling the menace of digital divide to digital libraries and to the society generally.*

KEYWORDS: Information Communication Technology, Digital Literacy, Digital Library, Digital Divide

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancement has taken over the globe. We live in a digital world today as everything we do is being shaped by digital intervention (Martin & Grudziecki, 2006). Thanks to Information Communication Technology- ICT, the ways through which we communicate, interact, read or write are being overtaken by technology. Humans as every other livingwith capacity to adapt to different environmental condition, have developed and acquired certain tactics or skills, to fit in, and function in this digital era. The acquired skills or tactics is termed as digital literacy.

Although there have been various arguments on what digital literacy should be, Buckingham (2006:3) referred to it as a set of skills that enables individuals to operate effectively in information retrieval task in technology-oriented environment. Certain skills have been identified as needed in order to be competent in a digital age. A digital literate person is a person who can evaluate and use information critically from relevant and authoritative source online (Buckingham, 2006:4).

Libraries support all forms of literacies from basic to digital literacies. While other forms of literacies are evident in traditional libraries, digital literacy is most prominent with digital

libraries. Digital libraries offer potentials to greatly improve how individuals search and retrieve information (Oluwaseye & Abraham, 2013).

Digital library according to UNESCO IITE (2006:6) is "a collection of digital representations of information content, along with hardware, software, and personnel to support the functions of a traditional library plus knowledge worker operations like searching, browsing, and navigation".

This in in some way is advantageous to the librarians as developing digital libraries saves cost of buying duplicate copies of books, as one digital format could be accessed by many users at the same time without causing any damage to the original copy. But how digital literate are the library users? Because in order to access, use or manage information online individuals require digital literacy (UNESCO, 2011:3).

While the everyday use of technology is a welcome development, it has created a void for those who shy away from, and do not have the basic skills or ideas of using modern day information technologies and the individuals who have the capability of using and understanding information digitally.

Libraries particularly are in danger of losing their patrons due to absence of digital literacy which can lead to digital divide. Osunkunle (2006) defined digital divide as gap that exist between those with access to and can effectively new information and communication tools and those who do not have access.

How then can this be resolved? what possible solutions are there to this challenge? This study hope to look at different literature and solutions proffered to tackle the menace of digital divide to digital libraries and to the society generally.

Purpose of the research paper

The purpose of this paper is to investigate what digital literacy is and its implications on digital libraries in Nigeria.

The study considered the following research questions to guide the search for the literature data.

1. What is digital literacy?
2. What are the importance of digital literacy?
3. What is digital library?
4. What are the implications of not being digitally literate in a digital library? How can this be overcome?
5. How can digital literacy be promoted and encouraged within the library?

METHODOLOGY

The study employed qualitative approach as research design. Online journal articles, databases were used Content analysis were searched as tool to gather data and conclusion was drawn. The method involves identification of words, phrases, databases used.

Limitation

The study focuses on open access journal articles and limited by paid up databases.

LITERATURE

Digital Literacy

E-safety support (2014), defines digital literacy as "the ability to locate, organize, understand, evaluate, and create information using digital technology; it is the ability to use and understand digital technology effectively for everyday task. In other word, it is an essential life skill. Bunker, (2010: 29) agrees with this and posits that digital literacy is critical for a nation's workforce within today's digital world.

Digital literacy encompasses the skills and abilities necessary for access once the technology is available, including understanding the language and component hardware and software required to successfully navigate the technology (Real et al, 2014:3)

Common Sense Media (2009) termed digital literacy as the use of technology competently to interpret and understand digital content and access its credibility, and also the ability to create, research and communicate effectively. UNESCO (2011), Meridian (1999) & DU GLO3 concurred that digital literacy is the ability to access, use and disseminate information in the digital age.

Importance of Digital Literacy

The importance of digital literacy cannot be over emphasized as it equips people with critical thinking skills and ability to evaluate and understand and interpret information from the internet without which is very detrimental.

Digital literacy enables individuals to make informed use of digital technology and media as it offers opportunity to participate in new kinds of social activities. (Hague & Williamson, 2009:1) It enhances employability with recruitment being increasingly undertaken online and provides skills needed for people to gain access to work places.

According to UNESCO IITE (2011) digital literacy have beneficial effects on learning skills and competencies because it broadens the scope of potential knowledge.

E-Safety (2013:4) observed that digital literacy serves as a tool for collaborative, creative and recordable communicative techniques essential for the next generation. In addition, it empowers individual with the 21st century skills of creation, capacity to communicate, collaborate and to protect one's privacy. In order to fully participate and be active in this modern era one needs to be digitally literate to meet global competitiveness (Shopova, 2014:2)

However, Eshet-Alkali (2004) concluded that digital literacy goes beyond skills needed to use or operate technological devices, rather survival skills needed in this digital era.

Digital Library

Digital library has been interchangeable used with electronic library (e-library) or virtual library. The term connotes a form of library where all resources are digitised as such are accessed online using computers or mobile devices. There is no single definition to the term.

Seadle and Grefeineder (2007) observed that digital library is a hard concept to define, as most definitions given are imprecise. Some students in their study, came up with this definition "a digital library is the electronic provision of digital documents in connection with online services, building on the tasks of a traditional library, which enables worldwide access to its collection via the internet (their translation).

Kumar & Rao (2014) in their study defined" digital library " as an organised and focused collection of digital objects, including text, images, video and audio, with the methods of access and retrieval and for the selection, creation, organization, maintenance and sharing of collection.

Digital Library as defined by IFLA- UNESCO manifesto, is an online collection of digital objects, of assured quality, that are created or collected and managed according to internationally accepted principles for collection development and ……… ,allow users to retrieve and exploit the resources.

Oluwaseye & Abraham (2013:1) observed that rapid expansions in ICT brought revolutions to the libraries thereby giving birth to online libraries which in turn brings new demands and expectations for both library users and librarians. However, just like other technologies, effective use of the digital library would depend on users' acceptance.

With the advent of digital library, users do not need to step out of their homes before accessing information in different libraries. They can do so from whatever location as long as they have mobile devices or computers that are connected to the internet with user authentication.

As digital libraries continue to spring up, more and more channels to universal knowledge and information, connecting cultures across the world is made possible (IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto).

Implications of digital illiteracy in digital libraries

Information sources and resources are increasingly available online, people with limited or no digital literacy will not be able to access computers, databases or internet leaving them at total disadvantage which can lead to serious resentment and disdain for the digital library. This at the long run can lead to lesser patronage with negative impact on both the library and the user, creating wider void or information gap (Shapova, 2014).

Being digital literate has become a necessary requirement for deriving maximum benefit from a digitized or digital library without which users and even library staff will find themselves confronted with digital divide.

Although many equates confidence in using digital technologies to being digital literate, Hague & Williamson (2009:10) believe that digital literate does not translate to competence.

Bridging the void of digital literacy

Acilar(2003) suggested that government to develop framework of ICT access that covers the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in terms of connectivity and lowering cost of access; new ICT policies and the need to develop culturally relevant content online should be considered.

Where there is an increased number of connected computers in community centers and libraries offering local access points this can alleviate digital gap and hence increase library patronage(Bertot and McClure: as cited by Okwor, 2011:3)

NCREL (2003), opined that having computers in every home is a way of bridging the digital divide. ICT (2002) Literacy Panel as quoted by NCREL (2003) argued that focusing on provision of infrastructures must be complimented by effort in identifying those without computer skills or know how and then helping them with necessary knowledge to acquire those skill.Technology keeps evolving as such individuals owe it to themselves to keep learning and updating their knowledge constantly so as to keep abreast with newer version of technology.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Libraries can engage in literacy programs and trainings in collaboration with the communities the libraries provides information services to. Library users need to be both information and digital literate in order to have the ability to locate, evaluate and adequately make use of needed information.

Libraries need to organize regular workshops or seminars to raise awareness among their users on importance of digital literacies and should hire more ICT inclined and digital literate librarians to anchor these workshops.

Public libraries can play important role of bridging digital gap by provision of free access to workstations and internet services, training and assistance to those lacking skills and having difficulties using internet (Morgan, 2014)

The feeling of dislike for technology which has led to low patronage of e-libraries and services due to lack of skills necessary to make use of computers and internet can be addressed through provision of digital literate classes. Teaching digital literacy is a sure way of tackling digital divide in libraries.

CONCLUSION

Digital literacy is needed skills for both librarians and library users, without which can lead to detrimental results to both libraries and users.

For libraries to be successful and up to date in this technology era, and run their digital libraries smoothly, digital literacy should be one of their main focus for both their staff and users. Digital literacy in this content encompasses both the technical ICT skills in using the internet and critical thinking in selecting, accessing and using the information.

Workshops and seminars could be organized for staff and some basic digital literacy skills be introduced to users so as to enable them develop critical thinking in evaluating, selecting and accessing of information as well as being relevant in this digital era.

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