

Electronic Library Resources as Tools for Effective Teaching and Learning in Higher Education in Nigeria

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Abstract: *The study on electronic library and resources cannot be underestimated in the teaching and learning process in higher education in Nigeria. The paper explores the role of electronic resources as tools for effective teaching and learning in higher education. There is need to examine the benefits and challenges in the adoption of these resources. This study highlights the potential to promote teaching and learning in the digital age.*

Keywords: Electronic Libraries, Electronic resources, Teaching and Learning, Higher Education.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries have witnessed a great metamorphosis in recent years both in information development. Libraries are using information and communication technology to improve the management of scholarly information. Over the years, a significant transformation has been noticed in information management. Print medium is increasingly giving way to the electronic form of materials. The transition from print to electronic medium in a growth of electronic information has provided users with new tools and applications for information seeking and retrieval. (Sharma, 2009); Okon & Ahiazu (2008).

The trend toward ICT has accelerated the use of e-libraries to complement the role of traditional library. This is because, libraries are faced with challenges, competitions, demands and expectations. As a result, libraries redesigned its services and information products to help add values to services and satisfied the needs of their users. Information users want to supplement the printed information resources with more dynamic electronic resources putting much demands on electronic information (Trivedi, 2010).

It has been observed, and with literature in electronic libraries and resources available, users are not deriving maximum satisfaction from electronic libraries/resources in higher education in spite of the functions and benefits associated with electronic libraries/resources. This is the focal point of this paper. The role of electronic libraries/resources in harnessing information cannot be underestimated.

E-Library/Resources as Tools for Effective Teaching and Learning

E-library is a library in which collections are stored in digital formats accessible by computers. It is a library with a managed collection of information where the information is stored in digital format and accessible over a network (Arms, 2007). E-library makes it possible for the collection to be organized accessible remotely by a computer. The services are online services. Electronic resources on the other hand are soft copies of information provided timely in electronic format, made available in databases. Electronic resources are research tools that complement printed sources of information in a traditional library setting (Ekenna & Ukpebor, 2012; Dadze, 2005). Electronic resources include e-books, e-journals, articles, newspapers, databases among others (Adeniran, 2013).

The history of electronic libraries/resources date back to 1960s with the introduction of Machine Readable Catalogue (MARC) and Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC). This is followed by the development of internet in the 21st century (Hawthorne, 2008). E-libraries have become an invaluable asset in research, teaching and learning by allowing users a wide range of opportunity for accessing accurate and timely information on various subjects made available through its use of e-resources. The use of electronic sources enable the users to effectively access digital information, knowledge and resources which serves as a motivating factor E-libraries help in decision making and develop new understanding. E-libraries provide information that enable users have access to up to date information on various subjects. It assist in developing new thinking and learning skills. For example the internet gives the users a wide range of opportunities, in the creation, and dissemination of information (Chisenga, 2000).

The use of e-libraries/resources has become prominent in the drive for making information and data transfer available to users, provides opportunity to acquire and disseminate information on a subject of interest. Information through electronic resources has many functions and benefits that are of immense use, particularly in research institutions. Once users are connected to the internet, the users can link up with any part of the world (Ray & Day, 1998; Osunrinde, Adekiya & Adeyemo, 2002).

The purpose of the E-library is to complement the role of traditional library to aid learning and knowledge acquisition as well as to boost research and intellectual growth around the world. E-library provides;

- Access to a variety of national and international content;

- Access to large collections;
- Network accessible to users on the internet,
- Information made available in electronic format.
- Efficient delivery of information
- Dissemination of knowledge faster.

Sources: UNESCO (2001); Trivedi. (2010).

Challenges

In spite of the functions and benefits. The use of electronic libraries and resources in Nigeria are still below expectation. There is lack of IT skills and limited access to computer terminal. Omekwu (2001), argued that, these challenges among users may deter them from using electronic information sources as the online searching depends on the ability of the users to perform the search in their possible way. The performance of e-libraries also has been hindered by irrelevant information. The needs to filter the results are some of the basic problems encountered while using electronic resources. One other major problem with search engines is that search queries turn up too many results with erring on the side of recall rather than precision. Also, there is the problem of download delay and the failure to find information inadequate. The use of e-libraries and resources is associated with lack of search skills and power outages (Delcourt & Kinzie, 1998).

The amount of information put on the internet every day is sometimes confusing. As a result some individuals and organizations cannot render effective services to users. This is quite unhealthy and uncomfortable to users. The amount of credibility and quality of the sources cannot be determined. There are challenges for selecting and implementing integrated library system as a gateway is no longer sufficient. The expectations of library users have grown to include more than just retrieving materials from other places. With e-library in place, library users now able to manipulate what they find and interact with. It becomes possible for a database to be linked to other database or resources in the libraries (Cohn, Kelsey & Fiels, 2001). All of these tend to show that e-libraries/resources have not measured adequately in higher institutions in Nigeria.

UNESCO (2001) quoted Ajayi, in "Science, Technology and ICT in Nigeria", that information Technology (IT) is the bedrock for national survival and development in a rapidly changing global environment. It is therefore, a challenge to devise bold and courageous initiatives to address host of vital socio-economic issues such as reliable infrastructure, skilled human resources, open government and other essential issues of capacity building. A developing nation like Nigeria, that aspires to participate effectively and become a key player in the emerging information age needs to have in place.

However, some progress have been made in the history of e-libraries/resources in our higher institutions as reported by UNESCO (2001). The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural, Organization (UNESCO) in October, 2001, has agreed to refocus its Special Plan Action programme for Nigeria towards establishing electronic library for higher institutions. The idea was that given the low capacity of the higher institutions to stock their libraries with relevant books

and literature, it was imperative to exploit information and communication technologies (ICTs) to provide solution to this problem. The report also identified the urgent need in addressing the crises of quality of education in Nigeria.

A Study of Internet usage in Nigerian universities in Nigeria shows that the internet is arguably one of the most significant technological development of the late 20th century. However, despite the added benefits of this tool to learning, teaching and research, a number of problems still plague internet connectivity and usage in the Nigerian university system. According to UNESCO (2001), expert meeting on digital libraries in Education was organized by the Institute for Information Technologies in Education (ITE) in Moscow region, Russian Federation and Joint Institute for Nuclear Research in cooperation with the Russian Conference on Digital Libraries and Institute of Informatics Problems of the Russian Academy of Sciences. The idea was to exploit ICTs in adding quality to education in Nigeria.

In the first half of 2002, the feasibility study for the Development of a Virtual Library for Universities and Institutions of higher learning in Nigeria was launched. The purpose is to assess what elements are needed and what steps will have to be deployed in order to develop a Virtual Library for University and Institutions of higher learning in Nigeria through funds provided by the Government and other donors. It serves as an action-oriented policy and project development tool for implementation of such a project in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

E-library is a managed collection of information where the information is stored in digital format and accessible over a network. Expectations of library users have grown to include more than just retrieving materials; library users are now able to manipulate what they find and interact with between them and the information. In addition, information users want to supplement the printed information resources with more dynamic electronic resources putting much demands on electronic information thereby making library to reorganize themselves so as to be relevant in the scheme of things.

The benefits of electronic libraries and resources cannot be undermined. Library complement the role of traditional library to aid learning and knowledge acquisition, boost research and intellectual growth around the world. Although there are benefits in the implementation of e-libraries, there are also some challenges. University libraries must brace up to the tasks of proving effective and efficient e-libraries and resources in university libraries, if the libraries must be relevant and meet the taste and admiration of users in Nigeria.

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