

ACCESS AND USE OF ELECTRONIC RESOURCES IN THE LIBRARIES IN ADDRESSING EDUCATIONAL ISSUES IN NIGERIA

By

POSIGHA, Bassil Ebiwolate (CLN) Niger Delta University

Department of Library and Information Science

basilpublication@gmail.com

&

ECHEM, Mercy Ekenma (CLN)

Department of Library and Information Science,

Faculty of Education

Rivers State University, Rivers State, Nigeria

echemmercy@gmail.com

Abstract

The influx of Information and Communication Technologies (ITCs) into has changed the roles and responsibilities of librarians, the methods of accessing information, usage of information resources and as well the format of information resources. Information resources are either in print or electronic format or both in print and electronic format. In this article the authors demonstrated that, increased access and use of have significantly addressed the standard of education worldwide. Specifically, the paper discussed the concept of e-resources its usefulness to education, some advantages and disadvantages of e- resources, access and use of online resources in addressing the entire education sector. Also discussed in the paper, is the control of access to online resources through ID login and password, Internet Protocol (IP) authentication and licensing policies. The discussion demonstrated that the management of online resources is fundamental to their access and use among users. The paper concluded that online resources are widely accepted because of their enormous merits over the prim. Despite their acceptance, users of the resources are faced with several challenges to access and use the resources

Keywords: Electronic Resources, Access and Use, F-resources Management, E-resources, National issue, Education, Nigeria.

Introduction

Electronic resources are good information resources that can be easily deployed to address educational issues in society. In discussing this topic, the term e-resource is used interchangeably with online resource and e-material in this study. The concept of "electronic resources" is a widely discussed topic in the fields of computer science, information and knowledge management, library and information science, etc. The term could mean different thing to different people. Thus, the meaning may differ, depending on the professional background of such individuals discussing the concept. From the library and information science context, e-resources are those resources that can only be accessed via the Internet with

the aid of electronic devices. The prominence of the e-resources in academic communities is inevitable and cannot be over-emphasized. Today, electronic and digital formats of information are interspersed in our day to day routine personally, academically and professionally (Kumar, E-resources are of high educational value particularly to researchers, lecturers and students. With e-resources, the barriers of distance, limited number of users and accessibility is now a history particularly with the influx of e-resources in the society.

Thus, the unlimited access and use of electronic resources provide a good platform to address national issues such as security, crises, education, etc. In today's modern information society, information either in print or non-print has been classified as a veritable tool that has the power to address national issues. This is for fact that, information that appears in electronic format can easily be accessed, shared, and transferred from one source to another to make meaningful decision on security, crises, education, etc. These potentials make the materials the most reverence and useful in the society. This is the more reasons why librarians and other information providers are in the forefront advocating for increased access and use of online resources amid academia and researchers worldwide. This paper demonstrates that uninterrupted access and proper use of online resources is formidable in addressing education

Online Resources

Online resources are attracting the attention of the academic communities. As such, an all-embracing definition has become necessary to explain the concept. One such definition was given by Dhanavandan and Tamizhchelvan cited in Posigha, Asaba and Enah (2018). The authors described online resources as resources that "require computer access or any electronic product that delivers a collection of data, be it text referring to full-text bases, electronic journals, image collections, other multimedia products and numerical, graphical or time-based, as a commercially available title that has been published with an aim to being marketed. These may be delivered on CD ROM, on tape, via Internet and so on". The authors further stated that, over the past few years, several techniques about related standards have been developed which allow documents to be created and distributed in electronic format. The authors emphasized that electronic resources are regarded as the mines of information that are preserved through modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT) devices, refined and redesigned and more often stored in cyberspace in the most concrete and compact form and can be accessed simultaneously from point by a great number of audience.

The emergence of e-resources has brought tremendous changes and developments in document sharing, accessing and use among academia. Electronic resources are optimizing support for research and education. The resources have become very popular with increased use of electronic newspapers, magazines, journals, books, etc. Electronic resources can either be 'born digital' or 'digitalized', which means the resources are digital by origin and as well digitally archived by scanning printed materials respectively (Kumar, 2018) He pointed out that, the need for electronic formats of information resources is due to sustenance of easy access quick access, share, port, edit and search capabilities compared to printed versions. It has been found that usage of e-journals is on the increase. One is due to awareness among the users about the library e resources and services, Owing to any easy access available at various places in the

academic institution, users are accessing these resources at hostels and departments more as compared to the library (Kaun & Verona, 2009).

Unique Features of Online Resources

The uniqueness of online resources cannot be underestimated. Due to the unique features of online resources, they may have been considered as the most reliable, accessible and discoverable sources of information for researchers. In emphasizing the unique features of e-resources, the Association of Research Libraries cited in Otubelu (2011) outlined some of the features to include:

1. The resources will never be loaned out and will be available at anytime, anyplace and anywhere;
2. Access is provided to more complete set of journals than, in many instances, now exist on many library shelves;
3. The cost of tracking the arrival of each journal issue, claiming and periodical binding will be eliminated;
4. The need for additional library space may decline, and
5. The cost of retrieving and re-shelving materials will be reduced

Advantages of Electronic Resources over Print Material

Electronic Resources offer several advantages to libraries, users authors, editors, publishers, and archivists. Some of these advantages are identified by Ashikuzzama (2018) to include the following:

1. Low cost of production compared to print documents
2. Cost of publication and distribution is less than the lost of the print
3. Saves enormous time by providing easy and instantaneous access without wasting time for processing, printing, binding and delivery.
4. Eliminates printing, binding and postage costs.
5. Allow interactive facility
6. Facilitate easy duplication into new media and distribution.
7. Integration of different media (Image, Sound, Video etc)
8. Saves library storage space.
9. hyperlinks to related additional resources,
10. Have potential to conserve fragile, precious original materials

11. Allow remote access from anywhere at any time, etc.

Challenges of Electronic Resources over Print Materials

Higher institution libraries and as well users of online resources are facing enormous challenges in their plight to make adequate use of the materials. These challenges cut across electronic devices, inadequate ICT infrastructures, human capacity, etc. Concurring, Aslukuzzama (2018) outlined the following as some of the challenges faced by users and providers of e-resources:

1. All e-resource devices require power;
2. Require high cost for technology infrastructure;
3. Need special equipment to access
4. Lack of compatibility among different publishers;
5. Hardware and software compatibility problem;
6. Copyright violation problem;
7. Current e-book format may not be readable by future e-book devices;
8. Book reading devices are more expensive than most paper books,
9. Lack of awareness on IT skills for usage of e-resource;
10. Technological barriers, etc.

Access to E-resources

It is important we understand the concept of access. This will guide the discussion on access to e-resources. The Merriam-Webster dictionary (1997) defined access to information as the freedom or ability to identify, obtain and make use of data or information effectively. The question is how many people in Africa, particularly in Nigeria, have access to information and the ability to identify and obtain information of their choice either in print or electronic? Access to information in any society is fundamental to the development and well-being of that society. It is meaningless to discuss them without access to the materials in question.

According to Heart cited in Posigha, Asaba and Enah (2018), there are several research efforts in information access, whose objective is to simplify and make it more effective for human users to access and further process large and unwieldy amounts of data and information. Today, access to e-resources is still a lively discussion among librarians, because majority of librarians believe that increased access to e-resources will as well increase the use of the resources. Such use could be directed in addressing national issues such as education, agriculture, security, etc. In ascertaining access to e-resources, Mwantimwa, Emmanuel and Ndenje-Sichalwe (2017) reported that majority of academic staffs and researchers have access to e-resources in Tanzania. Therefore, there are indications that more academics and researchers have access to remote databases that house current and relevant e-resources.

Use of E-resources

The usefulness of a product determines its widespread and patronage in society. Since the advent of e-publishing and digitalization technologies, e-resources have witnessed a wide acceptance and high degree of use among academic staff, researchers, students and other groups of users. Several studies on the use of e-resources reported high and wide rate of usage and as well low rate of usage among academics (Akpojotor, 2016; Ojo & Akande, 2005; and Posigha, Asaba & Enah, 2018). In addition, others reported that the core group of researchers using e-resources is growing and the use of the resources is becoming more frequent and diverse (Manda & Nawe, 2008). Others reported that majority of users feel that the use of e-journals has created high value in their research works (Madhusudhan, 2008).

Similarly, Mwantimwa, Emmanuel and Ndenje-Sichalwe (2017) also reported that majority of academic staff and researchers are utilizing e-resources to support teaching and research in Tanzania. The resources do not only contribute to research works but have also immensely contributed to the success and progress of the entire education sector in Nigeria. The use of e-resources is not only limited to lecturers and researchers but cuts across the entire users of information in society.

Access Control of E-resources

In a traditional library, the books, journals, reference materials are owned by the library. Users come to the library to make use of the materials but in the case of online materials, the reverse is the case. In an online environment users are highly restricted access to e-resources and at such face series of challenges. According to Armstrong, Croft, Kok and Edward (nd), the expectation of library users for seamless access to all articles, and providers' non-uniformity of access delivery is a critical issue many libraries are facing today. Providing access to users is problematic because of the different conditions providers allow access to their online materials. Some providers control access through ID login and password, 11 authentication and licensing policies while, others do not require ID login and password to access the materials (Armstrong, Croft, Kok and Edward, n.d). Despite the stringent access, majority of researchers have been using e-materials to address educational challenges to improve all levels of education, particularly in Nigeria.

Management of E-resources

The emphasis on the management of e-resources is to ensure unlimited access and maximum utilization of the resources to address education and other vital areas of life. Therefore, the issue of adequate management of e-resources cannot be overemphasized. It is a fundamental aspect of availability and accessibility of e-resources in libraries. E-resources management is a process that involves acquiring, organizing and making the document available and useful. Considering, the key processes (acquiring, organizing, creating access, negotiation of license terms, vendor contract, keeping usage statistics, etc.) that are involved in e-resources management, the place of qualified and knowledgeable personnel, adequate funding, and application of modern devices cannot be ruled out.

Qualified digital librarian with good knowledge of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a prerequisite to adequate management of e-resources. Such librarians are expected to take a lead in the planning budgeting, funding and supervising of the entire process of e-resources. Librarians who are involved actively in management of e-resources will no doubt understand the best license terms and vendor contracts that will be of interest to the users and library management (Posigha, Asaba and Enah, 2018). For proper management of e-resources, there must be quality policies regarding what should be selected, acquired, who should have access to the materials, etc. This is because information resources whether in print or electronic format are fundamental to the success of any educational institution.

Education and Electronic Resources

E-resources are key components of education. Education is a formidable tool that leads to the development of the individual and the entire society, as such e-resources are prerequisites needed to achieve the goals and objectives of education. Therefore, it is considered the bedrock of any nation and the growth therein. According to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1997), education is the act or process of educating or of being educated. The standard of education in any nation may determine the level of civilization, economics social interaction, political advancement and the general development of that nation. In other words, the absence of quality education spells doom for that nation. If a nation must grow and compete with other nations, priority must be on education. Education, being part of national issues, government, nongovernmental organizations and stakeholders need to consistently articulate and adopt measures that will provide quality education that will drive all sectors of the entire system. Hence, the quality of education to a large extent is determined by available instructional materials particularly books (print and non-print) and other information resources. Thus, e-resources are veritable tools that support the entire educational sector, specifically the following areas in education:

1. Research and development.
2. Teaching and learning in higher levels of education;
3. Development of education policy;
4. Writing of thesis and dissertations in higher institutions of learning;
5. Knowledge creation;
6. Serials and research publications;
7. Writing of term papers, students' projects, etc.

Use of Electronic Resources in Addressing Educational Issues

Experience has shown that the use of conventional print materials can no longer meet the information needs of information users as the demand for information is increasing daily. Thus, it is obvious that the use of information in electronic format is preeminent in addressing issues,

particularly in the educational sector. Education policymakers might be shifting from print resources to electronic resources, because of their easy access and use of the resources. Every policy maker in education may depend on e-resources information to make good educational policy and as well bringing innovations to the educational sector E-resources on similar educational issues of other countries that are far apart can easily be accessed and compared, and as well used to solve similar in any other country.

On the other hand, observation shows that host of information, users particularly, the educationists, researchers and stakeholders in education do not have the time to visit the libraries, as a result, they prefer the electronic version of every information source that is readily available in their laptops and mobile devices which can be used at their comfort zone. Today's innovations and advancement of education are a result of research of the past. The truth is that these research findings appeared more in electronic format and are easily accessed by distant users all over the world. Certainly, researchers' educators and government have significantly benefited from the use of online resources. Such benefits may include using the information contained in the resources to:

1. Make sound education policies;
2. Develop educational infrastructures;
3. Develop education technologies;
4. Develop education curriculum;
5. Develop teaching aids, etc.

Promotion of Access and Use of E-resources

Considering the importance of e-resources to education, there is a collaborative effort between librarians, stakeholders in the information industry and the government toward the promotion of access and use of e-resources. As we witness today, there are several efforts (library orientation, exhibitions, teaching of use of library, etc.) towards the promotion of access and information resources in libraries. For example, the idea of managing information resources either print or non-print is to promote access and use of the materials. The Ranganathan's five laws of information use could be attributed to emphasis on the promotion of the use of information resources. The laws stated that:

- Information is for use
- Every user his/her information
- Every information its user
- Save the time of the user, its corollary, save the time of the information
- Institution is a growing organism.

These laws strictly indicated that there is an urgent need to promote access and use of e-resources in society particularly in the educational sector to maximize their use among researchers, lecturers and students. Therefore, stakeholders in education and government can promote access and use of e-resources in the following ways:

1. Creating awareness of the importance of e-resources through the media and social media), workshops and conferences;
2. Provision of ICT infrastructures to facilitate access and use of e-resources particularly in the academic environment where e-resources are mostly used;
3. A majority of research outputs particularly in Africa are published in closed access where the resources are not available to the general public due to financial constraints. The government and non-governmental organizations can promote access and use by funding such research to encourage open-access publication.
4. Provision of a well-equipped digital libraries and study centres with sufficient laptops, e-readers and other useful devices;
5. Provision of institution repository where every local content can be stored, accessed and used by the institution members and other distance users;
6. Consistent subscription of database through collaboration between library administrators, government and its agencies, e-publishers and other stakeholders in information dissemination to ensure consistent accessibility by users;
7. Access and use can also be promoted by library consortium. With the help of consortiums among academic libraries particularly with institution repositories, materials locally produced can easily be accessed and used by the users;
8. Librarians can also promote access and use of e-resources by regular education of the users of information on the availability and accessibility of e-resources within the library's holding.

The Contributions of E-resources to Education

To meet the dynamism of education and ever-increasing need for access to information to address educational challenges, there are clear indications that libraries are moving from traditional print information resources to electronic resources. Today, the efficiency of a library and its collections is judged by number of e-resources or database the library is holding. Thus electronic resources are an integral part of academic libraries' collections worldwide. This has resulted in increased contributions of e-resources to the advancement of education. These contributions are in the area of;

1. Accelerated e-learning and distance learning;
2. Increased research and development activities;

3. Quick access to information resources that are hosted outside the environment;
4. Easy discovering and retrieving of information by educators, students, and stakeholders in education;
5. Availability of information to the entire academic community;
6. Increased utilization of information and,
7. Increased academic performance among students, etc.

Conclusion

Electronic resources are widely accepted among academics in facilitating teaching and research due to their availability anywhere, anytime and at the comfort of the users. However, there are constraints (finance, technology, power, etc.) in accessing and making use of the materials. The emergence of e-resources came with some advantages and disadvantages that libraries and users of the resources are still facing today. Despite the constraints, the materials are best used in addressing education issues. The availability of online resources helped and supported researchers and educators in carrying out teaching and research effectively. The innovations and ideas derived from the research are used by policymakers in education and government to improve the standard of education. Nevertheless, access to e-resources is still one of the challenges that librarians and users of information are still struggling with as most research work is published in closed access.

References

- Akpojotor, L. O. (2016). Awareness and usage of electronic information resources among postgraduate students of library and information science in Southern Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice (Journal)*.1408.
- Armstrong, E. A., Croft, V. F., Kok, V. T., & Edward. F. L. (nd). Electronic resources access: issues and resolution in two academic libraries. In 4 International Conference of Annual Health Information Specialists (ICHIS), Budapest, Hungary, 6-9 August. (nd) Pp. 2-3. Available at <https://research.libraries.wsu.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/2376/202523/5/2018>.
- Ashikuzzaman, M. D. (2018). Impact of e-resources and services on higher education and research. Available at: <http://www.lisbdnet.com/impact-of-e-resources/>. Accessed 15/11/2018.
- Kaur, B. & Verma, R. (2009). Use and impact of electronic journals in the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, India, *The Electronic Library*. 27(4), 611-622. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02640470910979570>.

- Kumar, A.A. (2018). Usage of electronic resources among ophthalmologists in India. In: S. Thanuskodi (Ed.). *Literacy Skill Development for Library Science Professionals*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, pp. 54-80. *Literacy Skill Development for Library Science Professionals*, Available at <http://online-journals.org/i-jet/article/view/1424>. Accessed 15/6/2018.
- Madhusudhan, M. (2008) Use of UGC Infonet journals by the research scholars of University of Delhi Library. *Hi Tech*, 26(3), 369-380.
- Manda, P. M. & Nawe, J. (2008). The impact of e-information resources use on research output: experience from University of Tanzania. Available at: <http://www.Ajol/info>. Article. Accessed 13/8/2018.
- Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1997), (10 ed.). Education. Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated.
- Mwantimwa, K., Emmanuel, E., & Ndenje-Sichalwe, E. (2019). Utilization of e-resources to support teaching and research in higher learning institutions in Tanzania. *University of Dares Salaam Library Journal* 12(2), 98-123.
- Ojo, R. A. & Akande, S. O. (2005). Students access, usage and awareness of electronic information resources at the university college hospital. University of Ibadan, Nigeria, *Lagos Journal of Library and Information Science* 3(1), 16-24
- Otubelu, N. (2011). E-library through digital libraries. The case of National Open University of Nigeria. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*.615. <http://digitalcommoons.unl.edu/libphilprace/615>.
- Posigha, B. E., Asaba, J. & Onah, E E. (2018). Access and management of e-resources in libraries and information centers. *JATLIM International Journal*, (1), 67-77.