

CONTENTS, SERVICES AND VISIBILITY OF UNIVERSITY LIBRARY WEBSITES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated the contents, services and visibility of university library websites in Nigeria. It was found out that only 39 out of 129 libraries in Nigeria had functional library websites. Over 80% of the university libraries' websites contained basic information such as library introduction, library resources, and information about their social media. 82% and 90% of the university libraries provided internet access and OPAC services to users through their websites. In terms of visibility, library pages on the websites were found to be within three clicks on 56% of the library websites, with 100% visibility within thirty seconds. The study concludes that the hallmark of any library website is its ability to deliver real-time services online. The study recommends among others the re-designing of existing library websites to accommodate interactivity and capacity.

Keywords: *Library website, E-resources, Library services, OPAC, Open source*

Introduction

University libraries are often confounded with the challenge of meeting information needs of diverse users ranging from undergraduates, graduates/postgraduates, research scholars and faculty members. Hence, the internet is relied upon as an efficient and effective platform for sourcing and sharing information. Libraries are leveraging on this technology to migrate their services to the World Wide Web (www) for high quality library and information service provision in digital and electronic formats. The World Wide Web has also opened up new vista which has led to a change in library patronage. While users in major parts of the developed societies now prefer virtual library resources and services to the physical library resources and services, same cannot be said of in many parts of developing nations. Digital technologies which library website is one, has reduced the usage of libraries in developing countries (Emezie and Nwahoiri, 2013). This trend in technological innovations coupled with digitization efforts have led many university libraries in Nigeria to provide websites that would reflect their various current activities. The current study therefore seeks to identify university libraries in Nigeria that have library website, describe and analyze the contents available and measure the visibility of the university library websites.

Need and Purpose of the Study

Library website remains the viable gateway for providing web-based library services to students and faculty members. It has the capacity to provide remote access to information resources and

the potential to keep information and resources up to date. While libraries in developed nations have established their online service provision through library websites, libraries in some developing nations have also designed and developed their website in order to extend their services online for remote access. Statistics from the National Universities Commission (NUC, 2013) confirmed that there are one hundred and twenty nine (129) universities in Nigeria. The study of Oguiche (2017) also revealed that Nigeria has greater number of universities and research institutions compared to any other country in sub-Saharan Africa and produce large volume of research outputs that are of paramount value to scholarly community. The study therefore seeks to determine the number of university library websites in Nigeria, the contents available on them, the services provided and their visibility.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

1. Which Nigerian university libraries have websites?
2. What are the contents available on the websites of Nigerian university libraries?
3. What types of services are provided on the websites of Nigerian university libraries?
4. How visible are the Nigerian university library websites?

Review of Related Literature

The library website is a collection of related web pages, images, video or other digital assets that are addressed through a common uniform resource locator (URL), consisting of a domain name, or internet protocol (IP) address to an Internet Protocol based network. It is one of the important tools used to publish the activities of the library, provide details of programmes, library facilities and resources. The studies of Brower (2004), Perek and Gupta (2013) and Mohammed, Garba and Umar (2014) traced the history of library website to early 1990's when Mosaic the world's first browser was launched. After this period, many libraries around the world began to develop websites to support the information needs of their users. A library Web site can play different roles; it can serve as a workstation where a user finds databases, electronic texts, and the online catalog. It is a way to make library-made products available, it is used as a window to the WWW by making Internet resources available on a selective basis, and it is a communication tool where information about services, people and facilities and collections can be found (Diaz, 1998). Gbaje and Kotso (2014) recommended that for a library website to be effective and meet the information needs of visitors, it must conform to certain best practices as follows:

- a) providing a single point of access to library resources
- b) allowing teaching staff to direct students to useful resources more easily
- c) promoting the resources held by the library, including subscription
- d) improving navigation of library resources
- e) improving access to scholarly and educational web based resources
- f) providing more efficient access to e-resources
- g) improving information service delivery
- h) provide library services 24/7
- i) facilitate access to library and information services remotely

Library website, according to McGillis and Toms (2001), reflects its virtual public face, acting as a front door to the collections, services, and, to an extent, its staff. Hence, many users visit a library's virtual website more often than they visit its physical location (Connell, 2008).

Information on library websites usually contains location, sitemap, library hours, library rules, news & events, membership, library tour, FAQ, date of updating, contact, feedback, and administrative activities, nature of links, collection, services, social networking sites, and application of web 2.0 technology (Haridasan and Uwesh, 2014).

Academic library websites are key in an institution's presentation of information resources and services (Cohen, 2003), and, as such, may be seen as the libraries' virtual presentations to the world (Liu, 2008). Connell (2008) opined that academic library websites provide information about libraries and library services as well as access to online catalogues, electronic databases, digital collections and different library tutorials; academic library websites are thus gateways to information for faculty and students. Today, students can ask reference questions online, conduct research in databases, place interlibrary loan requests online, and obtain academic articles electronically. Figure 1 shows the model of a library website.

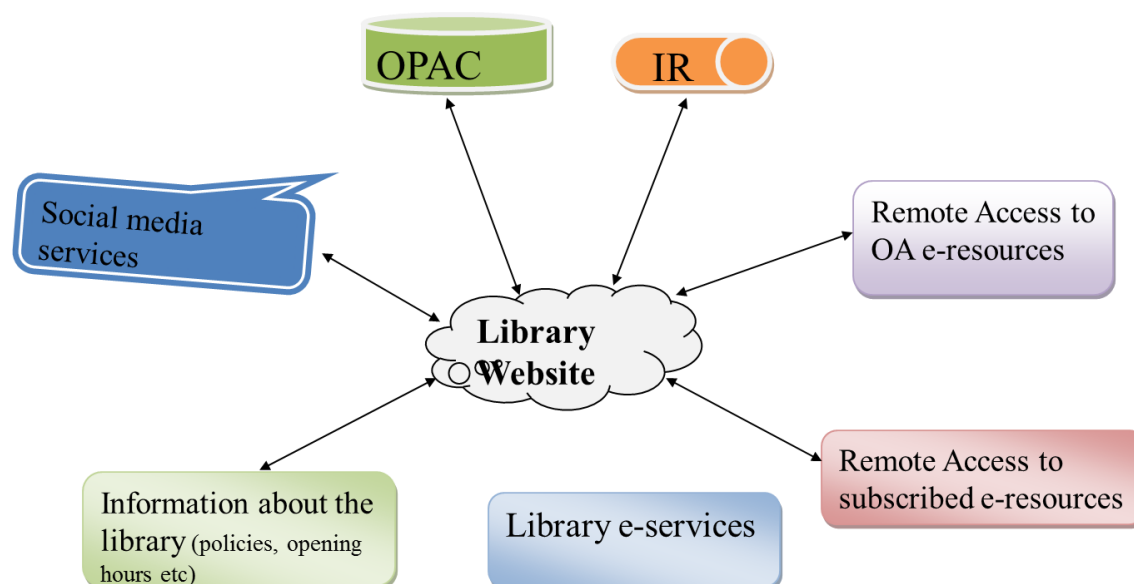


Figure 1: Model Library Website

Several studies have been conducted in the area of library website however, majority of these studies focused on performance evaluation and usability of library website with little emphasis on content analysis. Karla and Verna (2011) corroborated the above assertion when they posited that although a body of literature pertaining to the systematic study of websites' content and structure is developing but studies of the content of library and information websites are rarely studied. Mangala (2005) evaluated the websites of Indian universities with special reference to their library's web pages. The study revealed among other findings that 91 (59.8%) of the universities included information about their libraries on their websites. Major findings and suggestions were presented and directory of Indian university websites were created as a by-product of the study. As mentioned earlier, university library website is an extension of the institution it represents, libraries must therefore, plan and design the contents of their website bearing in mind several factors such as navigation, access, speed, interactive services such as RSS feeds, chats with a

librarian, general library information, mission statements, collection, resources and services, catalogue access, electronic resources, contact information just to mention but few.

In another study of library website, Bower (2004) analysed the contents and navigational elements of academic health library websites vis-a-vis general information about the library, library web site aids and tools, library services, library resources and navigational metrics. Similarly, Michalec (2006) conducted a content analysis of art library web sites and analysed content, contact details, hours of operations, information about the library collections, the library web page location on the parent organisation web site, and number of clicks required to navigate library information, availability of search engine links, internet subject resources, local resources, electronic databases, and links to reference assistance along with other basic library-related information contents.

The study of Haridasan and Uwesh (2014) revealed that majority of the central university library websites in India provides informative link to contacts, news and events while a few websites provide opportunity for user interaction in the form of feedback. Also, few library websites provide links to mission statement, location, sitemap, and library tour while good number of the libraries provides the library hours, library rules and membership on their websites.

In a related study, Mohammed, Garba and Umar (2014) studied the contents of university library websites in Nigeria and reported that the general information about the selected libraries, such as library services and their physical holdings are all inadequate. They recommend that skills of librarians in website development should be improved upon, and library curriculum in library schools should be enhanced to include website development among others.

According to Raward (2001), a major consideration in the design of academic library websites is the multiplicity of users and information needs that exist in the university environment. A library website therefore requires an interface that can accommodate the different needs, scholarly disciplines and capabilities of the many and varied users within its institution. Lee (2001) stressed that the designing of a library website is an evolutionary process. He stressed further that as good design principles continue to evolve, so should library websites and website evaluation should be incorporated into general web management principles. From a different perspective, Gbaje (2007) emphasized that a good and effective library portal/web page should not just contain general information about the collections and staffing of the library. The web page should be used to facilitate access to web based resources and services.

Ward and Mervar (2003) stated that a library's web site is a powerful gateway that can provide information to patrons, but often users access Google or other sources for information even though library web sites provide more authentic, reliable and organized information and internet sources than the general internet. This is an indication that the contents of a library website to a large extent determine its frequency of visit by users as well as marketability of the library's products and services.

Methodology

The study was conducted in segments using web-based survey technique. A survey was conducted by the researcher to prepare a list of University library websites in Nigeria as a result of the unavailability of any directory of university library websites in the country. The web-based survey was conducted to identify university libraries with active and functional website also to analyze the contents and visibility of Nigerian university library websites. An online questionnaire was designed and posted to the Nigerian Library Association (NLA) online fora for members. Data collected from respondents were further verified by typing the URLs on a web browser to ascertain

their existence. The process revealed that only 39 out of 129 universities in Nigeria (as at November, 2020) had library website which contained at least one page for analysis. Related literature was also reviewed and some websites were accessed to develop a checklist for analyzing the university library websites in Nigeria.

A checklist was adapted from the studies conducted by Michalec (2006), Qutab, (2009) and Pareek and Gupta (2013). Three (3) African university library websites namely; University of South Africa (UNISA) library, University of Nairobi library, Kenya and University of Accra library, Ghana were visited to get an idea of library web site content. The checklist criteria used for analysis is contained in preceding table and figures

Analysis

The study revealed that no library website contained all items on the checklist. However, a few library websites, such as the American University of Nigeria library, Kenneth Dike Library and University of Ilorin library contained a good number of items included in the checklist.

Table 1: Number of Library websites in Nigeria

S/N	University Libraries	Library URL
1	American University of Nigeria Library, Yola	http://www.library.aun.edu.ng/
2	Kenneth Dike Library, UI	http://www.library.ui.edu.ng
3	University of Ilorin, Library	http://www.library.unilorin.edu.ng
4	Kashim Ibrahim Library, ABU	http://www.abu.edu.ng/library/index.php
5	University of Jos, Library	http://www.unijos.edu.ng/library/index.php
6	University of Lagos, Library	http://www.library.unilag.edu.ng
7	University of Calabar Library	http://www.library.unical.edu.ng
8	Hezekiah Oluwasanmi Library, OAU	http://www.library.oauiife.edu.ng
9	Federal University of Technology, Owerri	http://library.futo.edu.ng/
10	Center for Learning Resources, Covenant University, Otta	http://clrmain.covenantuniversity.edu.ng/
11	Nimbe Adedipe Library, FUNAAB	http://library.unaab.edu.ng/
12	Festus Nwankwo Library, NAU	http://www.naulibrary.org/
13	Delta State University Library, Abraka	http://www.delsu.edu.ng/library_home.aspx
15	Donald E. U. Ekong Library, UNIPORT	http://www.library.uniport.edu.ng/
16	T.Y. Danjuma Library, ACU Oyo	http://www.acu.edu.ng/index.php/library
17	Igbinedion University Library, Okada	http://www.iuokada.edu.ng/TUO%20Library
18	African University of Science and Technology Library	http://www.aust.edu.ng/library/

19	Nigerian Turkish Nile University	http://www.ntnu.edu.ng/?about-library
20	Redeemer's University Library	http://run.edu.ng/index.php?active=library#
21	Madonna University Library	http://www.madonnauniversity.edu.ng/mu-library
22	Federal University of Technology Library, Akure	http://lib.futa.edu.ng/page.php?pageid=107
23	Federal University of Technology Library, Minna	http://www.futminna.edu.ng/index.php/library
24	Benson Idahosa Library, Benin	http://www.biu.edu.ng/library/
25	Bells University of Technology,	http://www.bellsuniversity.org/academics/library/index.php
26	University of Uyo Library	http://www.uniuyo.edu.ng/#82
27	Bingham University Library, New Karu	http://www.binghamuni.edu.ng/library.php
28	Federal University Lokoja	http://library.fulokoja.edu.ng/
29	Federal University Lafia, Library	http://www.fulafia.edu.ng/new/index.php/component/content/article/52-about-us/325-library
30	Federal University Dutsinma Library	http://library.fudutsinma.edu.ng/
31	Federal University Dutse	http://fud.edu.ng/library
32	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurum	http://www.fupre.edu.ng/s/?fupre=page&id=29
33	Federal University Kashere, Library	http://fukashere.edu.ng/site/index.php/libra
34	Federal University Otuoke, Library	http://www.fuotuokey.edu.ng/library
35	University of Abuja	http://www.funai.edu.ng/library/
36	Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Library	http://www.mouau.edu.ng/units/library
37	Federal University Birnin Kebbi	http://www.library.fubk.edu.ng
38	University of Agriculture Makurdi	http://uam.edu.ng/LibraryUni
39	Baze University library, Abuja	https://library.bazeuniversity.edu.ng/

Type of contents available on the University library website

This section presents the findings on the type of contents available on the Nigerian universities library websites studied. The finding is presented under two headings.

a. General information about the library

Figure 2 below shows the general information about the university library found on their websites

Figure 2: General Information about the library

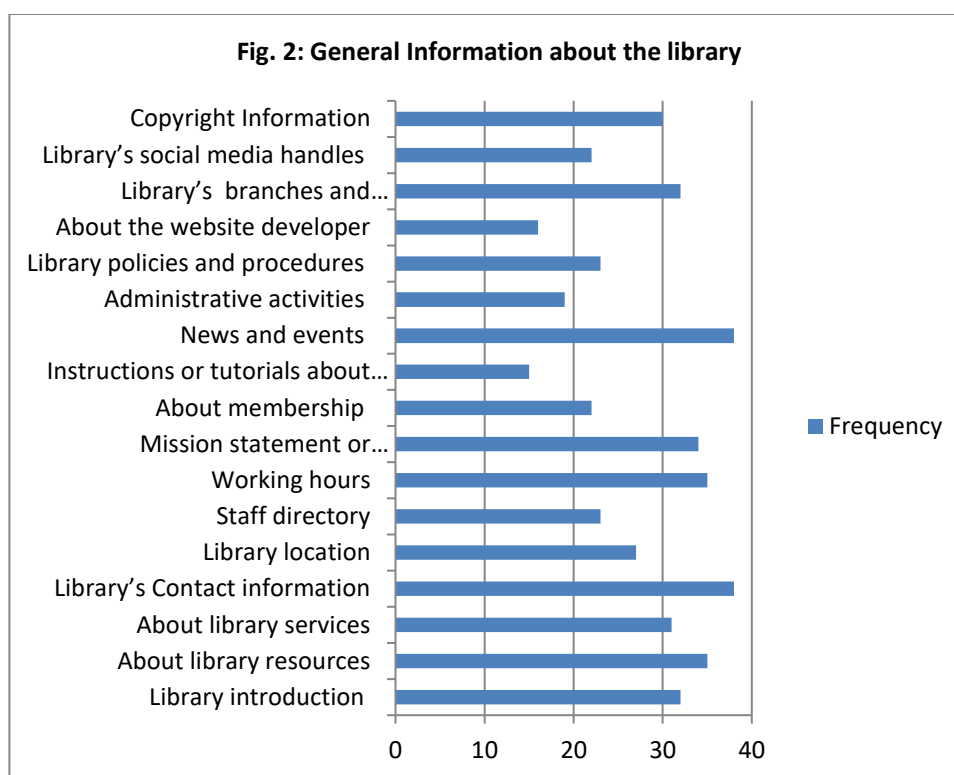


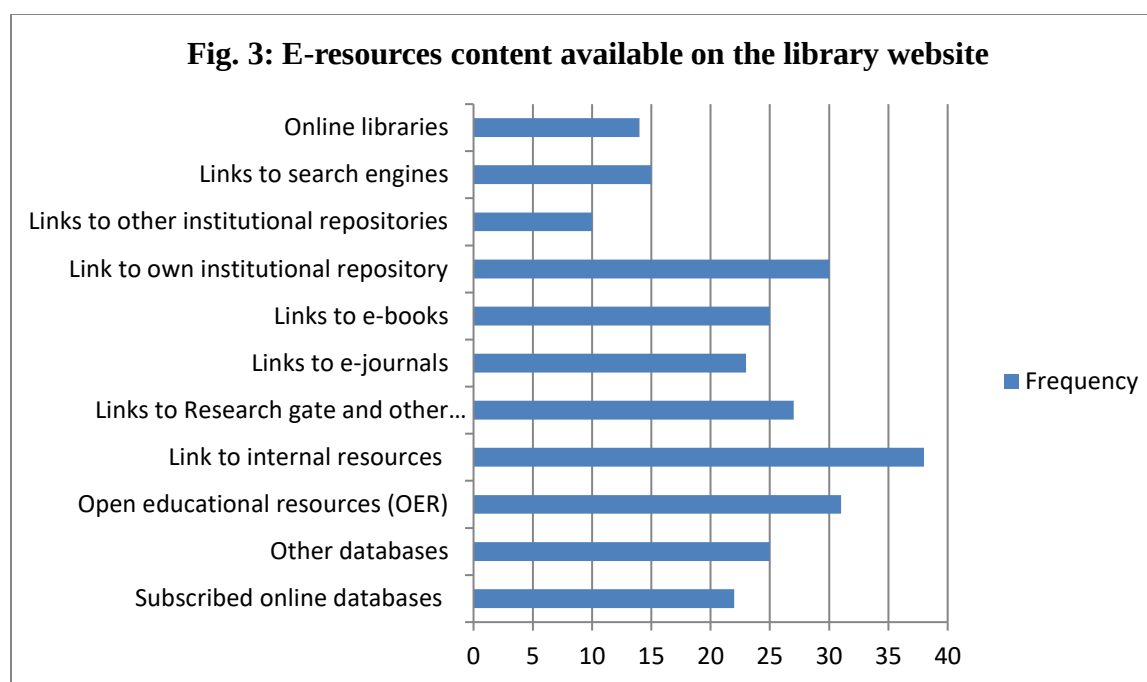
Figure 2 revealed that more than 30 (80%) of the university library websites contained basic information such as library introduction, information about library resources, their collection, services, contact information, location, staff directory, and information about their social media. This is no doubt a good development as visitors and users can grasp basic information from the home page of a library. Rward (2001) recommended that home pages of website should contain minimal text in order to meet the international best design practice. The table further showed that nearly all 38 (97%) of the library websites displayed contact information and news events on their home page while library rules 15 (33%) is the item with least availability.

A further look at the figure 1 also shows that 16 (41%) of the websites provided the contact information of the website developer. This again is a good practice as it is very necessary to know the expertise and qualifications of authorities who designed, developed and maintain a library website.

a. E-resources content available on the library website

In this segment, all the electronic resources found on the library websites are presented in figure 3 below

Figure 3: E-resources content available on the library website

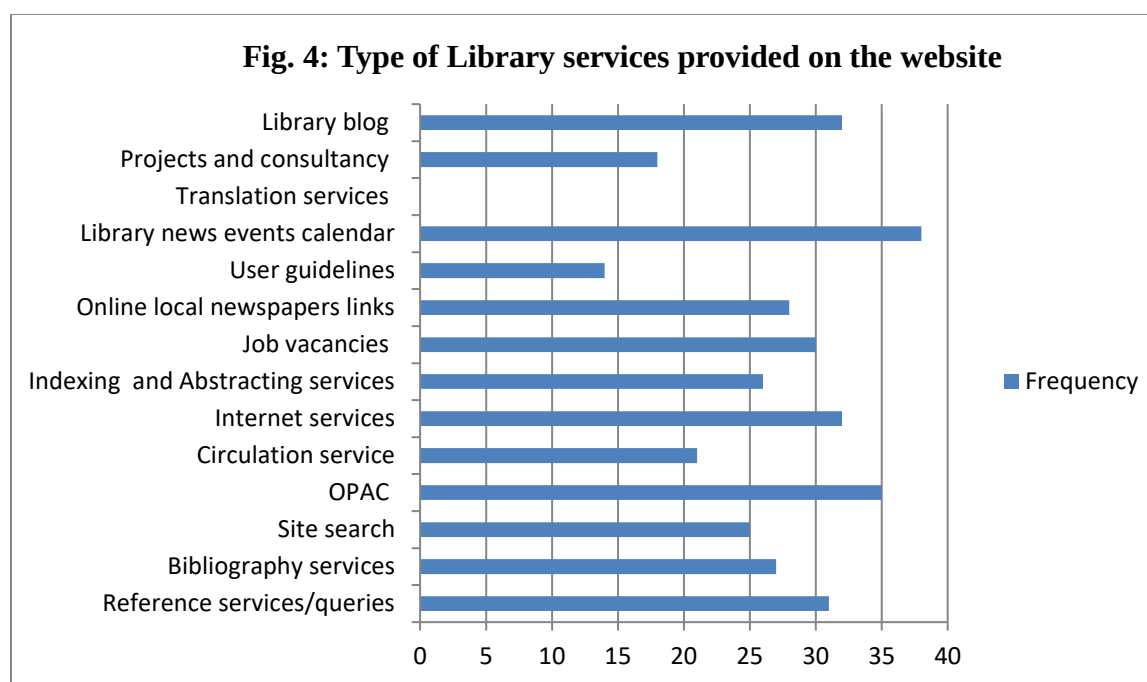


One of the key features of a library website is the links to electronic resources such as specialized subscribed databases as well as to other selected websites considered supportive to the online users of the library. Figure 3 above shows that most of the university libraries 38 (97%) and 31(79%) provided links to their internal resources and to Open Educational Resources (OER) through their websites while 14 (36%) and 10(26%) of the university libraries provided links to online libraries and links to other repositories

Types of services provided on the website of the university libraries

The type of services offered by the libraries on their website are presented in this segment for analysis

Figure 4: Types of Library services provided on the website of the libraries



From the figure 4 above, 32 (82%) of the university libraries provides internet access services to their users while 27 (69%) provide bibliographic services. Surprisingly, none of the libraries provided translation service from the information on their websites. 26 (67%) of the libraries provide indexing services to the users while OPAC service was provided by majority 35 (90%) of the university libraries.

Visibility of the university library websites

This section presents findings on the visibility of the university libraries studied.

Figure 5: Visibility of the University Library websites

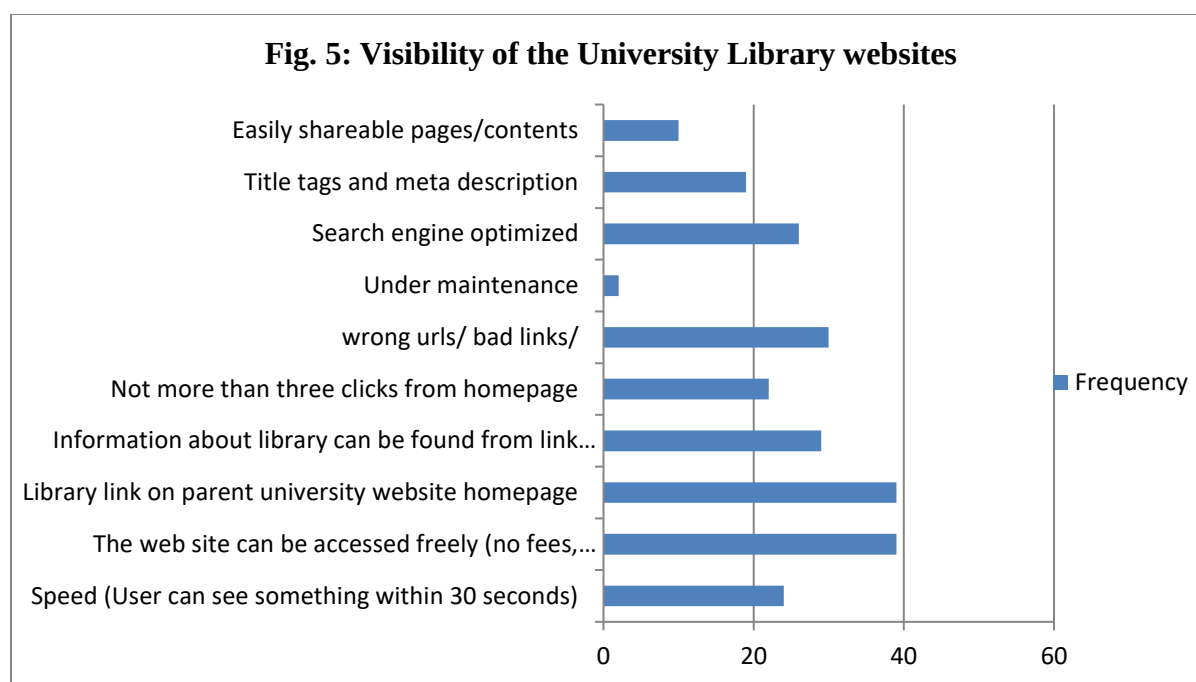


Figure 5 shows the visibility and accessibility attributes of the Nigerian university library websites studied. The study revealed that the homepages of all the Universities 39 (100%) provide links to their library websites or pages. Also, Library pages on the parent university's websites were found to be within three clicks on 22 (56%) of the library websites, with 39 (100%) visibility within thirty seconds. Only 2 (5%) of libraries had pages "under maintenance" and 30 (77%) had some links that were bad or wrong. According to Pareek and Gupta (2013), appearance of some useful text within eight seconds of time is believed to be acceptable with minimum dead links and completely constructed web pages. The fact that all the library websites provide access to external users is highly commendable.

Summary of the Major Findings

The study revealed that:

- Only 39 out of 129 university libraries in Nigeria have functional library websites
- Most of the university library websites contained basic information such as library introduction, library resources, collection, services, contact information, location etc.
- Of all the services listed on the library websites, only library blog, OPAC and internet services are provided virtually.
- The home pages of all the universities provide links to their library websites/pages
- A good number of the library websites greatly utilized "links to electronic resources" in varied forms.

Conclusion

Nearly all the university library websites studied provided general information about the library which is useful for guiding users and visitors on research. One of the major strengths of the findings in this study is the fact that a good number of the library websites greatly utilized "links to electronic resources" in varied forms. The ability to link users to various electronic resources from a single access point is indeed a major function of any library website. The hallmark of any library website is its ability to deliver services online however, most of the services listed on the library websites are not provided virtually, they were just mere

listings of the services provided in the physical libraries. This perhaps, is a pointer that university libraries in Nigeria are yet to come to terms with the reality of adopting website for providing real time online service delivery to users. The fact that only 39 out of 129 university libraries in Nigeria have a functional library website in this era of information explosion calls for concern.

Recommendations

The study recommends the following for improved online service delivery through library website in Nigerian university libraries:

1. With the proliferation of open source technologies for designing and developing websites, libraries should leverage on these technologies to make their presence felt online.
2. The library websites should be re-designed to accommodate interactivity and dynamism in terms of content, user friendliness and capacity.
3. Third party applications should also be incorporated or integrated into the library websites to enhance service delivery and to cover deficiencies in offline services.
4. The library menus or links should be visible and strategic on the parent university websites to enhance easy access by user.
5. As a policy, all universities libraries in Nigeria should be mandated to deploy website in their service to users. This will have a far reaching effect and encourage the use of library resources.
6. Libraries should invest more on acquisition of electronic resources. Where hard copies are involved, vendors should be mandated to also provide soft copies of their supplies. This will enable the library to integrate e-resources on their websites.

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