

ONLINE INFORMATION SEEKING PATTERNS AND UTILIZATION OF INFORMATION RESOURCES AMONG LECTURERS IN UNIVERSITY OF PORT HARCOURT LIBRARY

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the online information seeking pattern and utilization of resources among lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt. Three specific objectives and three null hypotheses were also formulated to guide the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population was all lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt that are registered with the library, while the sample size stood at 150 respondents randomly selected. A questionnaire was developed by the researchers for data collection. Independent t-test was used to test the null hypothesis. Literature review was carried out using the objectives of the study. The review was done with use of related research works in peer reviewed journals available both electronically and print. Findings showed that online information seeking patterns have significant influence of on the utilization of resources.

Keywords: Electronic databases, University Libraries, Search skills

Introduction

The University of Port Harcourt obtained legal status on 1st of October 1977. Due to its strategic location and programmes, it soon became a university of choice. The university currently has eight faculties and one college namely: Sciences, Humanities, Social Sciences, Education, Engineering, Management Sciences, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Agriculture and the college of Health Sciences. The university library's holdings stand at over 120,000 titles of different types of information resources. The library also has various types of online resources.

The University of Port Harcourt library was founded in 1978 in a temporary site before it moved to its permanent site in 2008. It was later renamed Donald Ekong library. The objective of the library is derived from that of its parent institution, the University of Port Harcourt. It exists to provide books, non-book/electronic resources and ancillary services which are

invaluable in extending and supporting the university's programmes of teaching, research and learning across all faculties.

The availability of online resources in university libraries has changed the use and information seeking patterns of these libraries by users over the past decades. More users are now able to access these resources and use them to meet their information needs. The University of Port Harcourt has acquired various subscription online electronic resources. These resources contain different databases housing various scholarly electronic journals and books. The information seeking patterns of academics has therefore been transformed by the availability and utilization of these resources as they no longer have to rely solely on physical books.

The various actions, reactions and activities exhibited by individuals when searching for information constitute information seeking patterns. Online Information seeking pattern has therefore been defined as the patterns exhibited by people in satisfying their information needs using resources available on the internet via the World Wide Web. Wilson (2009) described information seeking pattern as the totality of human pattern in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking.

There has been a paradigm shift from solely offline or manual patterns of seeking for and acquiring information, to online patterns. The use of the vast resources available online via the internet is fast becoming a popular pattern in seeking information. Abdullahi, Magnus & Solanke (2015) stated that the current ambit of information atmosphere is rich, characterized by an explosion of information sources and providers, a multiplicity of methods for accessing information, and a redundancy of content from multiple sources. This has made it necessary to locate and utilize the right online information resource.

These online resources possess the following characteristics which enable users maximize the retrieval of information: opportunity to gain access to current and up-to-date information resources and provision of extensive links to additional resources or related content; ability to manipulate search results by editing records, saving selected results to cart for future reference; they could be stored electronically thereby saving space and reducing loss, theft and damage.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To ascertain the different purpose of online information seeking and utilisation of information resources among lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt Library

2. To determine the different sources used for online information seeking and utilisation of information resources among lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt Library
3. To examine the different search skills used for online information seeking and utilisation of information resources among lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt Library

Research Hypothesis

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide the study.

1. The source of online resource does not significantly influence the utilization of online resources by lecturers the University of Port Harcourt library.
2. Lecturers' purpose of online information seeking does not significantly influence the utilization of online resources in University of Port Harcourt library.
3. Search skills possessed by lecturers do not significantly influence the utilization of online resources in University of Port Harcourt library.

Literature Review

Information Seeking Pattern Many scholars have unravelled in their studies that information needs are rather complex issues that must be determined uniquely for specific user groups as opined by (Adelani, 2009). According to (Agbonlahor, 2005) a number of factors such as ease of use of system, and users' beliefs, perceptions and training, have been cited as contributing to user acceptance and effective usage of computer-based information systems. It therefore becomes pertinent that adequate knowledge about the information needs and seeking patterns of this users' group is vital for developing library collections, services and facilities to meet their information needs effectively.

The concept of information seeking patterns has its home in the field of user studies and its history dates back to the first studies of scientific communication and information use. Information seeking pattern is the purposive seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goals. In the course of seeking, the individual may interact with manual information systems (such as a newspaper or library), or with computer-based systems (such as the World Wide Web).

Information seeking pattern generally refers to the way and manner people search for and utilize information. In information science, the concept of information has been defined in many different ways. In the cognitive view point, it is defined as the information associated with a text as the generator's modified (by purpose, intent, knowledge of the recipient and state of knowledge) conceptual structure which underlines the surface structure (e.g. language and text). This definition is subsequently elaborated by (Ingwersen, 2008) as information being the result of a transformation of the generator's cognitive structure (by intentionality, model of recipients' state of knowledge and in the form of signs). On the other hand, also, it is a structure which when perceived may affect and transform the recipient's state of knowledge. In this study it is conceptualized as a compulsory part of lecturer's activities in aiding to fulfill their educational function of teaching and research.

Information needs vary among individuals ranging from social to professional needs, for lecturers their information needs is expected to center around their academic needs and these could range from research purposes to general knowledge.

Online Information Services in Libraries

University libraries have been developing and changing in order to meet up with the current trends of satisfying the needs of users. Various resources and services have been put in place in order to build and maintain confidence in their users. Among these efforts is the introduction of services such as online academic databases and electronic databases. It would be impossible to search for articles in journals without the help of commercially produced databases. These databases provide access to: journal articles and abstracts, online encyclopaedias and dictionaries, e-books, newspapers and magazines. They usually contain thousands of journals and books in all disciplines and are usually up to date. Most online databases are available through subscriptions. Essentially one connects to an online database provider and is able to conduct searches, downloads results, email articles and even request for document delivery.

Types of online resources utilized by lecturers vary. These include scholarly journals which are usually available through online subscribed databases, electronic books, magazines and articles. According to Shuling (2007), in recent years, electronic information has gradually become a major resource in every university library. Majid et al (1999) argued that technological advancements have opened up new horizons for the creation, storage, access, distribution and presentation of information. Brophy (1993) also noted that the advantages of

electronic information resources over print ones include the following: speed, ease of use, ability to search multiple files at the same time, ability to save, print and repeat searches, more frequent updating and the ability to access from outside the library (more advantageous to distant learners).

Libraries usually have to subscribe with varying amounts to these databases for their institutions before they can gain access to the full text of the articles of the journals and the books. The National Universities Commission also established a consortium among university libraries in Nigeria where they subscribe collectively to these databases. These databases are usually restricted to the registered library users with user names and passwords.

University libraries have been making collaborative efforts in providing adequate online databases in which lecturers can utilize to meet their academic needs. According to Ahiauzu, B. E. and Ani, O. E. (2015) institutions like electronic Information for Libraries Network (eIFL.Net) and Nigerian University Libraries Consortium (NULIB) have been working collaboratively to provide electronic resources such as EBSCO HOST, HINARI, AGORA, MEDLINE, JSTOR and others. Each of these databases covers specific subject areas and the user needs to be conversant with the one that suit their needs.

Search Skills and Utilization

Search skills in utilising online resources include the ability to use search engines or library databases, define appropriate keywords, and use search options within a specific website. Effective utilization of online resources will depend on the application of effective search skills while searching for information. Studies like that of Shuling (2007) and Akinola (2009) have shown that online resources possess the following characteristics which can enable users maximize the retrieval of information: (1) opportunity to gain access to current and up-to-date information resources, (2) provision of extensive links to additional resources or related content, (3) ability to manipulate search results by editing records (4) saving selected results to cart for future reference (5) they could be stored electronically, thereby saving space and reducing loss, theft and damage.

Online search skills include reading skills and evaluation skills. Reading skills usually comprise the ability to sort masses of information and make decisions on what to use and what to neglect. Evaluation skills comprise the ability to assess the relevance, reliability, and authority of online information.

Nicholas, Williams and Rowlands (2010) conducted a study of researchers' e-journal use and information seeking behaviour in the UK the study used a quantitative research method and the data was collected from interviews, questionnaires and observations. This study confirmed that the internet is the first choice for researchers' information seeking nowadays and researchers from all disciplines preferred to use gateway search engines, such as Google Scholar and Google. Ying (2012) also found out in her study that the most used services and resources by all Lincoln University respondents are electronic databases/indexes (90%), electronic journals (87%), traditional printed sources (82%), electronic books (53%) and inter- loan library services (45%).

Improving search skills can help to:

- 1) Narrow down search results when a large amount of information is available.
- 2) Extract only the most relevant information.
- 3) Explore different aspects of a topic
- 4) Make your search more effective and save time. (Retrieved from https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studyingeffectively/reading_skills/searchskills/index.aspx)

Ying-Hsueh Cheng and Chin-Chung Tsai (2017) also stated skills required to include: using search engines and library databases as entry points specify keywords for searches, browse search results, chase references, assess and extract relevant sources, and synthesize information for specific research purposes.

Preliminary findings in (2007) identified that while people maybe tech savvy when it comes to entertainment, they may not have the critical thinking skills to perform the kinds of information management and research tasks necessary for academic success. Various skills are applied by academics so as to sift necessary information from the internet. Kamba (2015) observed that it is quite glaring that school teachers seek and obtained information from various sources and resources, applying different methods to identify and locate information. This goes to buttress the fact that these search skills are pertinent and is being utilized in one way or the other in retrieving information online.

Research Methods

The descriptive survey was adopted for the study across both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The population for this study consisted of all the lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt that are registered with the library. The sample consisted of lecturers selected through the simple random sampling technique, which was made up of 150. The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed questionnaire "Online Information Seeking Patterns and Utilization of Resources among Lecturers in University of Port Harcourt Library" (OISPURLUPL). Descriptive statistics of frequency tables and charts were used in presenting the data collected. Simple percentages were used to analyze the data relating to the research questions raised, the hypothesis were tested using the independent t- test statistics.

Presentation of Results

Table 1: Percentage Analysis of Demographic Variable

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender: Male	83	55.3
Female	67	44.7
Total	150	100
Designation: Graduate Asst.	12	8
Assistant Lecturer	22	14.67
Lecturer II	31	20.67
Lecturer I	30	20
Senior Lecturer	36	24
Professor	19	12.67
Total	150	100
Work Experience (years)		
0-5	19	12.67
6-10	22	14.67
11-15	51	34
16-20	31	20.67
21-25	18	12
26-above	9	6
Total	150	100

The table I shows the breakdown of frequency and percentage of the background information about the respondents. That the frequency of gender with male 83 (55.33%) while female 67 (44.67%). Lecturers' designation indicted that more of senior lecturers were involved in the study while the lecturers with work experience fall within 11-15 years.

Answer to research questions

Research Question 1: Is there any influence of purpose of online information seeking and utilisation of information resources among lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt Library?

Table 2: Percentage analysis of influence of purpose of online information seeking

S/N	Purpose of online information seeking	Percentages			
		SA F %	A F %	D F %	SD F %
1.	Carrying out research work	81 54	51 34	18 12	-
2.	Preparing lecture notes	89 59.33	58 39.33	3 2	-
3.	Collaboration with other scholars	42 28	13 8.67	59 39.33	36 24
4	Searching for scholarships and grants	5 3.33	11 7.33	131 87.33	3 6
5.	Preparing my publications	51 54	65 43.33	14 9.33	20. 13.33
6.	For my Ph.D work	41 27.33	11 27.33	81 54	17 11.33

Table 2 presents the results of frequency and percentage on purpose of online information seeking and utilisation of online resources. The results show that all the items, except no. 4 have lowest mean in terms of strongly agree/agree options. This implies that the purpose of online information seeking contributed highly to the utilization of online resources in the University of Port Harcourt.

Research Question 2: Is there any influence of type of online information resources and utilisation of information resources among lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt Library?

Table 3: Percentage analysis of influence of type of online information resources

S/N	Type of online information resource	Percentages							
		TGE		TME		TSE		NU	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Library online subscription databases	78	52	48	32	21	14	3	2
2.	Other online web sources	69	46	43	28.67	31	20.67	7	4.67
3.	University website	6	4	23	15.33	19	12.67	102	68
4	Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)	7	44.67	21	14	4	2.67	118	78.67
5.	Online Open Access journals	67	44.67	68	45.33	15	10	-	-
6.	Online subscribed access journals	21	14	18	12	97	64.67	14	9.33

The result in table 3 presents the frequency and percentage of the type of online resources utilisation by lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt. The result indicates that majority of the lecturers utilise the library's online subscription to a great extent with a percentage of 52 while the least used is the Online Public Access Catalogue with a percentage of 78.67 that have never used it.

Research Question 3: Is there any difference in the search skills on online information seeking and utilisation of information resources among lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt Library?

Table 4: Percentage analysis of influence of search skills on online information seeking

S/N	Skill possessed	Percentages			
		SA F %	A F %	D F %	SD F %
1.	I can specify keywords for my searches	58 36.67	45 30	37 24.67	10 6.67
2.	I can browse search results	59 39.33	37 24.67	34 22.67	20 13.33
3.	I can apply appropriate search techniques e.g. Boolean logic in searching for online information	62 41.33	51 34	41 27.33	6 4
4	I can synthesize information I get from multiple websites	25 16.67	48 32	56 37.33	21 14
5.	I can effectively evaluate online resources	7 4.67	69 46	34 22.67	4 -
6.	I can assess and extract and extract relevant resources	76 50.67	47 31.33	27 18	- -
7	I use advanced search methods to retrieve information	68 45.33	48 32	8 5.33	40 26.67

Table 4 presents the results of frequency and percentage of skills possessed by lecturers and utilization of online resources. The results show that most lecturers possessed sufficient skills needed to specify keyword for searches, browse search results, assess and extract relevant information, use advanced search techniques and apply appropriate search techniques. These are indicated by high frequency and percentage under strongly agree and agree options. However a significant percentage of 56% were not able to synthesize information gotten from multiple websites.

Testing of hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Lecturers' purpose of online information seeking does not significantly influence the utilization of online resources in University of Port Harcourt Library.

Table 5: Independent t-test result on purpose of online information seeking does not significantly influence the utilization of online resources in University of Port Harcourt library

Purpose of online information seeking	N	X	SD	df	tcal	Tcrit
Great extent	104	72.29	15.44	148	2.427	1.96
Some extent	46	66.30	15.70			

- Significant at .05 alpha level

The result presented in table 5 shows that the calculated t- value (2.427) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96) at .05 level of significance with 148 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected while the alternative is upheld. This implies that there is a significant influence of lecturers' purpose of online information seeking pattern on the utilization of online resources in the University of Port Harcourt Library.

Hypothesis 2: The type of online resource does not significantly influence the utilization of online resources by lecturers the University of Port Harcourt library.

Table 6: Independent t-test result on type of online resource and utilization of online resources in University of Port Harcourt Library

Type of online resources	N	X	SD	df	Tcal	Tcrit
Great extent	110	80.12	11.26	148	4.023	1.96
Some extent	40	70.90	15.17			

- Significant at .05 alpha level

The result presented in table 6 shows that the calculated t- value (4.073) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96) at .05 level of significance with 148 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected while the alternative is upheld. This implies that there is a significant influence of type of online resources needed by lecturers and utilization of online resources in the University of Port Harcourt Library.

Hypothesis 3: Search skills possessed by lecturers do not significantly influence the utilization of online resources in University of Port Harcourt library.

Table 7: Independent t-test result on the Search skills possessed by lecturers and utilization of online resources

Sources of online resources	N	X	SD	df	tcal	Tcrit
Great extent	112	75.37	15.38	148	3.784	1.96
Some extent	38	64.13	17.62			

- Significant at .05 alpha level

The result presented in table 7 shows that the calculated t- value (3.748) is greater than the critical t-value (1.96) at .05 level of significance with 148 degree of freedom. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected while the alternative is upheld. This implies that there is a significant influence of skills possessed by lecturers on utilization of online resources in the University of Port Harcourt Library.

Discussion of Findings

The result of hypothesis one showed that there is a significant influence of purpose of online information seeking behavior on utilization. This is true because the purpose of anything determines its usage. It's the purpose for which they are seeking for the information to satisfy one need or the other that will determine their utilization of the online resources. This finding is in line with Okogwu & Nnam (2013) that majority of the respondents from both universities (Obafemi Awolowo and University of Ibadan) seek information to update knowledge, 34.4% from UI while 36% respondents from OAU, One out of every four lecturers from the universities seeks information for their research works.

The result of hypothesis two showed a significant influence of type of online resources on utilization of online resources. This is because information sought is peculiar to the individual and this will also affect the choice of the type of resource to utilize. This finding is in line with the findings of Adelani (2009) that information needs are rather complex issues that must be determined uniquely for specific user groups.

The result of hypothesis three revealed a significant influence of skills possessed by lecturers on utilization of online resources. This is because acquisition of the right skills is important for effective retrieval of information online. The finding is in agreement with the finding of Kim (2011) that users need to have a certain level of computer skill in order to successfully navigate online resources.

Recommendations

The level of awareness and adoption of online resources should be investigated so as to determine its full utilization to justify the time and resources put into them.

Concerted efforts should be made to equip users with appropriate search skills to ensure adequate utilization of the resources. These can include in-house trainings, seminars, user education, library orientation, etc.

Help desks should be established in the library to assist those who need help in one way or the other.

Online resources should be well publicized to create adequate awareness of available resources.

The library should liaise with Heads of departments should to encourage their lecturers make optimal use of the online resources available in the library.

Conclusions

With the multiplicity of online information sources now available, lecturers now have more than enough choices to make in obtaining online information. The availability of numerous online library resources has resulted in an information rich environment. As the amount of available data grows, the problem of managing the information becomes more difficult, which can lead to information overload. Owing to the proliferation of online resources, it is pertinent that lecturers have to equip themselves with the right information search skills that will enable them retrieve required information online. This will go a long way in enhancing the research process by acquiring the right information needed.

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