

PROVISION AND ACCESSIBILITY TO ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES BY ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN DELTA STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, ABRAKA

By

Patience Uzezi OTOLO¹ and Williams T. Saibakumo

¹Readers' Services Division, University Library,
Delta State University, Abraka
E-mail: otolouzezi@gmail.com

² Collection Development Unit, Delta State University Library,
Delta State University, Abraka.
E-mail: saibatwilliams@gmail.com

Abstract

The study investigated the provision and accessibility of electronic information resources, and its utilization by librarians in Delta State University Library, Abraka. The survey design was adopted and a questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Forty (40) librarians were sampled with 85% retrieval rate. The findings showed that e-periodicals, e-journals, and e-reference were provided while e-indexes and e-abstracts, online database, e-serials and government reports were not adequately provided. Accessibility was low, thereby impeding librarian's scholarly activities. The reasons why librarians access e-resources included gaining general knowledge, to be current in the profession and for promotion. These activities were hindered by high subscription in underfunded libraries, low speed of computers and incessant power outage. It was recommended that the University Administration and Library Management should improve on the bandwidth so as to enhance Internet connectivity and facilitate researchers' access to online e-resources and ensure high research productivity. Also, more ICT trained personnel should be on ground to assist researchers.

Keywords: Electronic information resources, Provision, Accessibility, Librarians, Research activities

Introduction

Making information sources readily available and accessible to every user is a prerequisite for libraries and librarians. For learning to take place, learners must have access to necessary library materials. Libraries provide resources for knowledge acquisition, recreation personal interests and inter-personal relationships for all categories of users. However, in an academic environment, attention is basically focused on academic and non-academic staff, students and researchers. Oyewusi and Oyeboode, (2009) reported that the university library is the intellectual power house of the university, the pivot on which all the academic programmes of the University, revolve, the live wire of the university, but more succinctly as the academic heartbeat of the University system. The university libraries are established with the primary goals of providing information to students, staff and workers of the university community; and one of its objectives is to develop and maintain collections of information resources in all formats such as print and non-print and to make these information resources available and accessible to all. Librarians as academic staff need a wide range of library information resources to be made available and accessible for research productivity.

Research productivity of librarians can be described as a measure of research work such as writing articles in journals, abstracts, indexes, chapter in books or books produced and published by librarians. Yusuf (2005) pointed out that “*publish or perish*” is a popular cliché among academics in the Nigeria university settings. Therefore, librarians as academic staff need to share insight, demonstrate academics scholarship and gain recognition for creation, thinking that requires high knowledge of library information resources, availability and accessibility that is steady intended to determine the influence of electronic information resources, availability and accessibility on librarians’ research productivity. The 21st Century has witnessed a remarkable proliferation of e-resources with tremendous change in information usage pattern as envisaged from librarians’ research activities. Electronic resources are major sources for information dissemination for researchers in an academic environment where there is functional library (Lefuma, 2017).

The term electronic resources means library information materials that are in electronic format, such as e-books, e-newspapers, e-journals as well as internet resources such as databases, magazines, archives, theses, conference papers, government paper that are in electronic form (Deng, 2010). Adeleke and Nwalo (2017) defined electronic information resources as information that is stored in electronic format which are made available and accessible through networks. Researchers access different types of electronic resources such as Ebscohost, Agora, Hinari, Medline, or Jstor for their research activities. Various studies conducted on the availability, accessibility and use of electronic information resources by researchers shown that researchers in academic environment consult electronic resources for their research activities (Aukrah & Atuase 2018).

The importance of electronic resources to researchers cannot be over emphasized. The provision of electronic information resources within the context of this paper refers to the availability and easy access to information in an electronic format without stress by the library users. Availability and accessibility of electronic resources in most academic library are integral part of the electronic library (e-library) that stand as support to teaching, learning and research activities (Zhang & Liu, 2011). Studies have shown that factors such as the provision and access to electronic information resources influence research productivity, for example when Edem and Egbe (2010) reported the extent of availability and accessibility of electronic information resources by postgraduate students in the University library that the resources are readily available for accessibility.

Adeleke (2005) noted that if the library is to contribute to the advancement of knowledge, it must not only provide the resources but also ensure effective use of the resources by its users. Okiy (2000) stated that for the library to perform its role adequately, its resources must be effectively used. Provision, accessibility and use of information resources are indispensable to the teaching, research and community activities of academic staff in the University system. The measure of academic success of every academic staff in the higher institution of learning lies on her research productivity and the library collections must be adequate in terms of quantity, quality and currency. Information sources are efficient if they provide relevant, useful, and accurate information that can help users solve their problems (Nwagwu & Osiname, 2009). Akobundu, (2008) said accessibility of library information resources means the ease of locating and retrieving a piece of information from the storage medium.

The availability and accessibility of information sources might be considered relevant research issues where the information resources required perform various tasks available for accessing the resources available. Understanding availability of information resources requires the academic to have the ability to identify what resources are available for exploitation, where they are available, how to access them, the merits of individual resources, type and when it is

appropriate to use them (Armstrong, 2005). Bhatt and Rana (2011) identified that e-resources are faced with the problem of low speed connectivity, lack of awareness about statutory provision for accessing technical problems, high rate of purchase and subscription. Frankor and Akussu (2012) confirmed that academic staff in African universities had little access to relevant and reliable information when making decisions on their research activities. The inability of academic libraries to provide timely information to users in accessing e-resources is challenged by inadequate provision of modern ICT infrastructure such as computers, therefore libraries of the 21st century are charged to put in place adequate mechanisms to make for effective and efficient access and use of electronic information resources.

Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study consisted of 40 librarians from the main library of the Delta State University Abraka. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire. The three point Likert scale was used for the level of availability and accessibility. A total of 40 copies of questionnaire were distributed to respondents, out of which 34 (85%) were retrieved. Descriptive statistics (frequency counts - N and percentages - %) was used to analyse the data generated from the instrument.

Findings and discussion

The analysed data are presented in tables, followed by presentation and discussion.

Table 1: Demographic information of the librarians

Category	Details	N	%
Cadre	University Librarian	0	0
	Deputy University Librarians	1	2.9
	Senior Librarians	2	5.8
	Principle Librarian	0	0
	Librarian I	12	35.3
	Librarian II	10	29.4
	Library Assistant	9	26.5
Gender	Male	22	64.7
	Female	12	35.3
Religion	Christian	28	82.4
	Muslim	2	5.8
	African tradition	0	0
	Prefer not to mention	4	11.8

Table 1 shows the demographic information of the respondents. It revealed that most (35.3%) were in the rank of librarian I followed by the Librarian II (29.4%). There were no Principal Librarians and University Librarian probably due to the busy schedule of the latter. However, the fair distribution shows the collective contribution of all Librarians samples. It was also found that most (64.7%) of the Librarians were of the male gender while their counterparts were also represented in substantial number (35.3%). This basically reduced the incidence of stereotyping in response to the instrument. The religious beliefs of the librarians were also elicited which showed that the respondents were mostly Christians (82.4%) with no African Traditional worshippers which may be due to the dominance of the Christianity in the sampled region. A portion (11.8%) of the respondents didn't provide any information on their religious inclination.

Table 2: Electronic information resources available for use in the university library

e-Information Resources	VMA		RA		NA		Mean	SD	% availability	Remark
	N	%	N	%	N	%				
Periodicals	26	76.5	8	23.5	0	0	2.76	0.43	92.2	A
Government Reports	7	20.6	13	38.2	14	41.2	1.79	0.77	59.8	NA
Journals/text books	6	17.7	27	79.4	1	2.9	2.15	0.44	71.5	A
Reference materials	11	32.4	21	61.8	2	5.9	2.26	0.57	75.5	A
Serials	1	2.9	3	8.8	30	88.2	1.15	0.44	38.2	NA
Databases (e.g. Ebscohost, Agora, Hinari, Medline, Jstor)	0	0	0	0	34	100	1.00	0.00	33.3	NA
Indexes and abstracts	3	8.8	21	61.8	10	29.4	1.79	0.59	59.8	N
Mean		22.7		39.1		38.2	1.85	0.54	61.5	NA

Keys: VMA (very much available) = 3, RA (rarely available) = 2, NA (not available) = 1. A = availability, SD = standard deviation, N = 34. Criterion mean = 2.0, criterion percentage = 66.7%

Table 2 reveals the availability of electronic information resources in the university library for librarians use. Majority of the respondents 26 (76.5%) indicated periodicals are very much available for research activities. A total of 27 (79.4%) of the respondents indicated journals/text books are available, 21 (61.8%) of the respondents also indicated references materials are available and 21(61.8%) of the respondents indicated indexes and abstracts are available. All the respondents 34 (100%) indicated online databases are not available for research activities and also 30 (88.2%) of the respondents indicated e-resources are not available. This similar availability was reported in other Universities in Nigeria (Quadri, Adetimirin & Idowu, 2014; Adeniji, Babalola & Ajayi, 2015; Tofi, Agada & Okafor, 2020).

Table 3: Accessibility of electronic library resources by librarians for research

e-Information Resources	VA		FA		NA		Mean	SD	%	Remark
	N	%	N	%	N	%				
Periodicals	10	29.4	18	52.9	6	17.6	2.12	0.69	70.6	A
Government Reports	1	2.9	7	20.6	26	76.5	1.26	0.51	42.2	NA
Journals/text books	34	100	9	0	0	0	3.0	0.00	100	A
Reference materials	34	100	0	0	0	0	3.0	0.00	100	A
Serials	4	11.8	23	26.5	21	61.8	1.91	0.57	63.7	NA
Databases (e.g. Ebscohost, Agora, Hinari, Medline, Jstor)	0	0	0	0	34	100	1.00	0.00	33.3	NA
Indexes and abstracts	1	2.9	23	67.6	10	29.4	1.74	0.51	57.8	NA
Weighted Mean		35.3		23.9		40.7	2.00	0.33	66.8	A

Keys: VA (very accessible) = 3, RA (rarely accessible) = 2, NA (not accessible) = 1. A = accessible, SD = standard deviation, N = 34. Criterion mean = 2.0, criterion percentage = 66.7%

Table 3 reveals that all the respondents 34 (100%) considered journals/text books very accessible and 34 (100%) of the respondents considered reference materials very accessible. It was found that 23 (67.6%) of the respondents considered indexes and abstracts accessible when carrying out research activities in university library. Also, government publication was considered not accessible with 26 (76.5%) of the respondents. The findings corroborate the observation of Agulu and Aguolu (2002) that the existence of library information resources does not guarantee they will be accessible to users. Although the accessibility and availability at the University of Ibadan, Ibadan and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile Ife in southern Nigeria (Umeozor & Emasealu, 2017) and University of Agriculture in Makurdi (Ternenge & Kashimana, 2019) was in contrast with the present study. This may be due to far better funding by the Federal Government but in close similarities with Tiemo (2016) report which looked closely to the south south where the case study is located.

Table 4: Reasons librarians embark on research activities

Reasons identified	N	%	N	%	Mean	SD
To get better salary from research publications	16	47.1	18	52.9	1.47	0.51
For tenure on the job	4	11.8	30	88.2	1.12	0.33
To achieve peer recognition	19	55.9	15	44.1	1.56	0.50
To broaden the existing knowledge	32	94.1	2	5.9	1.94	0.24
For promotion	29	85.3	5	14.7	1.85	0.35
Satisfy my need to contributes to the field	9	26.5	25	73.5	1.26	0.45
To be current in the profession	34	100	0	0	2.0	0.00
For general knowledge	34	100	0	0	2.0	0.00
Mean		65.1		34.9	1.65	0.29
Criterion mean = 1.50						

Table 4 shows reasons librarians embark on research activities. All the respondents 34 (100%) embark on research activities in order to be current in the profession; also all the 34 respondents (100%) embark on research activities for general knowledge. Most respondents 32 (94.1%) engage in research activities to broaden the knowledge; 29 (85.3%) of the respondents embark on research activities for promotion. Librarians are academic staff in the university and therefore need to embark on research activities to enable them publish articles in journals or chapter in books to earn promotion. This collaborate an earlier findings by Yusuf (2005) who noted that publishing scholarly communications is a common practice among academics in the Nigerian university setting.

Table 5: Problems hindering library information resources use for research activities

Problem pointed out	N	%	N	%	Mean	SD
Lack of knowledge of search techniques	3	8.8	31	91.2	1.01	0.29
Poor maintenance culture	7	20.6	27	79.4	1.21	0.41
Incessant power outages	30	88.2	4	11.8	1.88	0.33
Dissatisfaction with libraries/colleagues' attitudes	12	35.2	22	64.8	1.35	0.49
Outdated resources	26	76.5	8	23.5	1.76	0.43
Inadequate resources	18	52.4	16	47.6	1.53	0.51

Computers with lower speed and capacity	32	94.1	2	5.9	1.94	0.24
Low funding with high cost of subscription	34	100	0	0	2.0	0.00
Weighted Mean		59.5		40.5	1.59	0.34
Criterion mean = 1.50						

The data displayed in Table 5 show problems faced by librarians in using library information resources for research. The entire 34 (100%) respondents are being hindered by high subscription cost with low funding of libraries, 32 (94.1%) of the respondents are hindered by computers with low speed and capacity, 30 (88.2%) of the respondents were hindered by incessant power outage. It was discovered that 26 (76.5%) of the respondents are hindered by the outdated nature of the available and accessible resources. The least problem that hindered the respondents 3 (8.8%) is lack of knowledge of search techniques. Power outage was mentioned as a major challenge by Adeniji, Babalola and Ajayi (2015) which hinders the smooth search for information during research. Most of the respondents emphasised the concerns pointed out by Idowu and Oduwale (2012), Quadri, Adetimirin and Idowu (2014) and Edem and Egbe (2016). This seem to have lingered for so long without been attended to by the university management.

Conclusion

The study revealed that on-line database as electronic information resources were not readily available for access and research while the very scarce resources provided need to be replenished. Librarians' main reasons for embarking on research activities are to be fully updated in their profession and for general knowledge for promotion. The study also revealed the challenges hindering librarians' research productivity, such as inaccessibility of available resources online, computer with low speed and capacity, outdated resources and incessant power outage.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The University Administration and Library Management should activate the internet services so as to facilitate effective use by staff for their research.
- ii. The Library Management should acquire more and current electronic information resources.
- iii. Regular power supply should be provided so as to enhance maximum access and utilisation of available information resources in the University Library.

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