E-LIBRARY AS A TOOL FOR COMBATING LOW LIBRARY USAGE AMONG NON-TEACHING STAFF IN FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC ILARO

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THE E-LIBRARY AS A TOOL FOR COMBATING LOW LIBRARY USAGE AMONG AN INSTITUTION'S NON-ACADEMIC STAFF: A CASE OF THE FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC ILARO

Abstract

This paper aims at exploring the imperative contribution that an electronic library can bring forth in addressing the low library usage among an institution's non-academic staff, citing the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro non-academic senior staff as the case study. It is not new that most, if not all, non-academic staff do not use or visit the library. Being devoid of information at this age is really dangerous. The emergence of information technology in library services has made most things easy and accessible. The e-library, without doubt, could be the paradigm shift in this situation. To this effect, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents that took part in the study. A questionnaire was used to gather data. Descriptive analyses, including percentage and frequency count, were used to analyze the data. Of about 400 non-academic senior staff at the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro, 150 non-academic senior staff were taken to represent the sample for the study. According to the study's findings, most non-academic staff believed that the library was only for academic staff. They also believe that the opportunity to visit the library is quite hard for them as their work schedule and time at hand are shorter compared to their academic counterparts. The study came to the conclusion that although electronic resources typically offer the chance to obtain current and up-to-date data/information, these non-academic staff have not made full use of these invaluable information sources. Based on the study's findings, the Polytechnic should upgrade its internet capabilities to make it easier for users to access electronic resources in order to promote greater usage. The Polytechnic should also teach non-academic staff members how to access the electronic resources/databases it subscribes to in order to maximize usage.

Keywords: *E-library, non-academic staff, federal polytechnic, information technology, library, e-resources, database*

1.0   Introduction

A library is a large collection of books, periodicals, films or other information sources including digital. The collections can be of print, audio, and visual materials in numerous formats, including maps, prints, and documents (Banerjee et al, 1999). However, Information and Communication Technology has revolutionized the concept of libraries. Each and every library is slowly getting digitized, Nigerian libraries inclusive. A 'digital library' otherwise called E-library, comprises digital collections, services and infrastructure to support lifelong learning, research, scholarly communication as well as preservation and conservation of recorded knowledge. At this age of a networked society where IT (information technology) in addition to its use in all spheres of human activity including education, has been used extensively to record, store, and disseminate the information in the digital form. Information technology has almost converted the world into a global village. The revolution in the IT sector is influencing the information industry also. Libraries are also changing to meet the demand put on them. With the current level of civilization, the new generation whose demand for information is never met is always demanding that traditional libraries be scrapped and development of digital libraries be embarked upon. According to (Arms 2003), e-library is a managed collection of information with associated services where the information with associated services where the information is stored in digital format and accessible over a network.

Advancement in technology is expected to bridge the mammoth gap between the shelf-life library and the digital library (e-library). The shelf-life library method eliminates the need to visit the library before information or materials can be accessed or obtained. It is an idea that is less suitable to the people of this digital dispensation. Instant messages and quick online updates via information technology (IT) enabled gadgets like smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc. make library visitation less appealing to people.

Adoption of e-library and ICT is on the high side in Nigeria libraries, as the influence of information communication technology on E-learning and thus the promotion of knowledge society via smooth sailing deliveries of information to the general public is becoming more and more obvious and evident. It is no longer news that the world has moved from the industrial age into information age. Man's quest for knowledge has led to the creation and accumulation of tremendous amount of information. The world today boasts of a knowledge-based society. This quest for knowledge knows no bounds and limits and is never satisfied

(Abdulsalami et al., 2013). According to Issa (2003), there has come to be in today's world, a full realization of the fact that information remains the prime commodity of present age. It has continued since the dawn of civilization to the modern age. Indeed, the availability and free flow of information bring about knowledge which has great potentials to provide impetus for the social, cultural, spiritual, political, economic, scientific and technological advancement of a nation. This hard-earned knowledge and information are valuable for the entire mankind and therefore liable to be preserved. With the invention of paper man has been able to convey this knowledge to others by writing books.

The act of introducing new educative ideas, items, materials, and protocols is part of a library's mandate. These aforementioned terms should be the next chapter towards the actualisation of better library usage. Thus, moving the information closer to the end users is the way forward in truncating the low usage of the library among non-academic staff of any academic institution. It is an obvious fact that most people prefer to be on their phone or computer for the whole day rather than visit a library. The tool to combat this challenge is an e-library/e-learning, or digital library combined with ICT. Also called an online library, an internet library, a digital repository, or a digital collection, it is an online database of digital objects that can include text, still images, audio, video, digital documents, or other digital media formats accessible through the internet.

An e-library is an instant library; a library at the fingertip; an ever-ready library; a plug-and-play library; an easily accessible library; any term for quick access to information and obtaining knowledge is most suitable for an e-library. It is the missing piece in having access to information without the necessity of going to a library. Non-academic staff engage in educational programs in the same breath as their academic counterparts, and the need for information is universal. To this effect, this study is primed to bring to light the importance and contribution of e-library towards improving library usage among non-academic staff of an institution.

1.1   Statement of the Problem

It is obvious from the evidence that non-academic staff seldom make use of the library. Most of them see no need to go to the library. The majority do not even know much about the operations of the library. Some believe that the library is just a quiet place to sit and read; for some people, it is a problem of time. They do not have the time to visit the library to read or

access information; they are mostly on duty from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day, while some work beyond 4 p.m. To that effect, bringing the library closer to them via the introduction of an e-library is the right way to go. The advent of the digital library has provided the necessary means to address the aforementioned problems. Data, information, and materials can be easily accessed online without much stress and even in the user's comfort zone. This fact is the mandate of this study.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To investigate the trend and impact of e-library resources among non-academic staff.
2. To identify the type of library currently in use by non-academic staff.
3. To identify the challenges faced by non-academic staff when using e-library resources.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study will serve as a wakeup call for librarians to gear up and introduce, teach and implement e-library among non-academic staff of institutions in order to diminish low library usage. The output of this study will serve as a blueprint for libraries, information managers/information scientists, researchers, lecturers, students, and teacher to chart the right course of action for the use of information and communication technology in furthering a knowledge society in Nigeria

1.4 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study shall be limited to Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, Ogun State and the study shall entail the information gathered from the selected institution.

2.0   Literature Review

2.1   An Overview of the Electronic Library

Egberongbe (2011) found out in a study of use and impact of electronic resources that the majority of scholars were not trained in the use of e-resources. The study also revealed that the level of IT skills among lecturers, scholars and library staff varied and was low. Informal methods of training; one on one consultations, was used to inform users.

Investigating the use of electronic resources by postgraduate students of the Department of Library and Information Science in Delta State University, Ozoemelem (2009) noted that there was a high level of usage of electronic resources by postgraduate students. In a study conducted in Australia by Deng (2010), the researcher revealed various purposes for the use of electronic resources which includes: gathering information on a specific topic, gaining general information, obtaining answers to specific questions, completing assignments, reviewing literature, writing essays and helping decision making. Such revelation reflects the facts that people are dependent on availability of e-resources to meet their academic task.

It was revealed in a study conducted by Madhusudhan (2010) that the most common problem facing use of electronic resources are slow access speed; it took too long to view or download a document. Another problem identified by the respondents was difficulty in getting relevant information due to information overload and lack of IT skills.

Komolafe-Opadeji (2011) investigated the use of Internet and electronic resources among postgraduate students of a Nigerian private university and discovered that postgraduate students regularly access the Internet and preferred using free online resources from Google and Wikipedia to subscribed online data bases like HINARI, EBSCO Host, JSTOR, Questia and High Beam.

2.2   E-Library: A Theoretical Framework

The term "e-library" is used synonymously with "digital library," "universal library", "future library," "virtual library," and "library without walls." It has been defined variously by different scholars and/or organizations, depending on their perception of the concept. Arms (2003) defines e-library as "managed collection of information, with association, services, where the information is stored in digital formats and accessible over a network." These two definitions recognize the need for the e-library to function over a network but the crucial part of the latter is that the information is managed. MacCall, Cleveland, and Gibson (1999) define e-library as collections of electronic knowledge resources developed and maintained in

order to meet the totality of information needs for a given user population. Like the traditional library, the e-library is also targeted towards a particular group of users in term of its information dissemination.

Acting as a "quality guide," e-libraries "often follow certain guidelines for the selection of content in order to maintain a consistent collection of data" (Virtual Library 2007). They follow procedures to select the materials in their collections, to organize and make them available to users. Waters (1998) states that, "digital libraries are organizations that provide the resources, including the specialized staff, to select, structure, offer intellectual access to the Internet, distribute, preserve the integrity of, and ensure the persistence over time of collections of digital works so that they are readily and economically available for use by a defined community or set of communities." The Kentuckiana Digital library (2009) points out the academic significance of the e-library, recognizing the use of appropriate technology and defining it as "an organized collection of selected digital resources created to support scholarship, research and teaching." It states further that the use of appropriate technological standards by e-libraries will facilitate permanent access to the digital resources. At the most basic level and central to the definitions is a collection of digital resources selected according to certain criteria and made accessible for retrieval over computer networks.

2.3   Types of E-Libraries and Resources

There are different types of e-libraries for the diverse information needs of the targeted group of users. Some are developed by groups or organizations, higher education institutions, research centres, national libraries, as well as public libraries. They include contents that are born digital and those that have been digitized (Digital Library, 2009). An e-library generally contains books, journals, opacs, webliographies (equivalent to a printed bibliography), letters, maps, dictionaries, encyclopedias, still and moving images, sound recordings, indexes, conference/seminar proceedings, theses/dissertations, abstracts and reviews, and handbooks. Traditional libraries have limited storage space, but e-libraries require very little physical space, which reduces the cost of maintaining an e-library.

2.4   Importance of E- Library

a) The Electronic Library ensures collection of documents, of which complete contents are created and converted for computer use. The accessibility in the computer, is for online use.

b) The purpose of an Electronic Library is to better create and organize distribution of information resources. The collection of Resources is to cover every human endeavour that would be vital for the society

c) Electronic Libraries should be seen as a logical extension for a physical Library. It allows for broader access to resources and materials used as information. Access to more resources gives way for providing new possibilities, for adequate retrieval of information.

d) According to an Author, E A. Fox, Electronic Library, provides new ways to function in compassing information, providing better ways of collection of data or information, and better ways of providing more effective storage.

e) A Fox also states that Electronic Library allows for new approaches, for classification and cataloguing, by intensive use of computer networks.

f) Electronic Libraries, allows for more flexible ways to organize intellectual resources and materials, to ensure quick access to information or data.

2.5   Benefits of E-Library

a) The E library has generated an Information Technology Environment, for individuals to improving education and this enables for improving skill for meaningful employment. Individuals begin to change from the traditional way of using a library, using computer technology to access, image, videos, and audio books, books, online resources, articles or Journals.

b) Digital or Electronic Libraries work faster in speed, as its easier to access information quicker. This is unlike the traditional Library. With a digital library, workers are able to work more effectively. Academics are able to carry out their research easily, because of easy access to resource materials or relevant information,

c) Digital Libraries unlike the traditional Libraries, can ensure the latest knowledge of information. The information will be updated regularly to give adequate opinions on a certain matter, Latest knowledge could be in education, science, environment and politics etc.

d) Digital or electronic libraries, ensures for storing enlarged materials for information. For example, data sheets, no matter how large or small can be compressed and stored in a computer.

e) Digital or Electronic library ensures for increased space for storage. As the space increases, the technology becomes more portable in nature. The compact disk or a DVD, in a system can help store large materials, and information.

f) Electronic Libraries ensure services like the online reference books, which are used to impact knowledge on a particular field or study. These books are designed to new technologies such as audio books, video clips, and learning aids to be used by individuals.

2.6   Problems of E Library in Nigeria

a) High Cost of Establishment

Digital or Electronic Libraries are very expensive to install even in the physical libraries. It is expected that governments need funding to be able to acquire an effective electronic library, Funding can be by government, non-government organizations, private or public enterprises. It's expensive to even establish cyber café or business centres for library services. This is because there will be need, for example to set up electronic network like computers, tablets, IPads, printers or scanners. There will be need to set up services like the email (used for online messages), World Wide Web and Automated Web search used to research, on the internet, for a particular information or material, relating to a course of study, field or endeavour.

b) Problem of Classification and Catalogue of Published Works

Digital or Electronic Library aids classification and cataloguing according to international standards. This enables for online publishing which is accessible, in the E- Library. E-Library allows for access to online Journals, Articles, or Resource materials. The National Library of Nigeria, had such problems. There was need for authors, researchers, or academics to acquire the International Standard Serial Number (ISSN) and the International Standard Book Number (ISBN), to enable for better organization of published works. This would not be possible without upgraded Technology for E-library, to be put in place.

c) Dependency on Technology

There is too much reliance on technology to operate Computers, or E-Library effective. Technology often is upgraded either by a new software or application, and would require Adjustments or Amendments. E-Library will have issues in operating effectively without Internet networks and a good Electronic Device. Most Libraries in Nigeria do not have the E-Library, because information Technology is not easily accessible. Internet Providers in

Nigeria, provide Wireless or Broad Band connections that is not affordable to most. Offices and Business Organizations, find it almost difficult to make payment for monthly subscriptions, for Internet. Without using the Internet, availability of Electronic Library would be impossible.

d) Training and Skill

Operation of the E-Library requires a lot of Skill and Training from the User. The User should be able to access the materials and resources, needed to acquire knowledge and information. Training of an individual, using the E-Library, enables for skills acquired to gain employment. However, most Libraries in Nigeria, do not have the skills on how to operate the E-library. Most Librarians do not know how to use the computers or access the Electronic Library. Many Libraries in Nigeria, still acquire information or data through outdated materials, articles, books, or Journals.

Most Students at the higher Institutions, find it difficult to use the E-library. This is in relation to the non-availability of Computers, or Internet networks. Students write out their school assignments merely by using textbooks or materials that may be outdated for their school projects. It is due to this that such Students, find it difficult to use the Internet to assess the E-library services, in Schools, which will enable them study properly. Students in Schools in Nigeria are not taught to be computer literate which make them more unable to equip with recent knowledge, through E-Library.

e) Copyright Issues

Digital or Electronic Library does not control piracy of intellectual works or duplication of another Individual's Research, Journals or Articles, which may be carried out by the user. Individuals like Researchers, Academics or Lecturers, may copy works of others published online. However, there has been caution for such to be stopped or resisted, the Electronic Library does not provide much protection. The Legislation called the Copy Right and Patent Act in Nigeria, has been put in place to combat piracy or duplication of works without the consent of the original owner.

f) Power Supply Generation

Digital or Electronic libraries, cannot operate effectively without constant electricity supply. Nigeria has poor service of Power Generation. Most States in the Country, hardly generates less than 18hous of Power Supply. This does not make the use of E-Library, fully Operational.

2.7 Solutions for E-Library in Nigeria

a) Building Centres to Promote E-Library Service

Recently, Nigerian Tertiary Institutions have begun to provide centres where E-libraries, are to be located. For University of Benin had already established an E library centre known as AfriHub. This is to improve Students' ability to access the library to carry out research, school projects or Assignments. This was to encourage more Students having access to more resources and materials, establishing centres, by promoting use of Electronic Library, for easier school work activities.

b) Affordable Internet Services for Easier Access of E-Library

Nigeria has internet services ranging from wireless, broad band and mobile internet services. Unfortunately, the services are generally not very cheap. There is need to make internet service providers, make their network affordable and more convenient for users. Once there is affordable access of internet, users can reach sources of E-libraries operating locally or even globally.

c) Better Legal Regulations for E-Library Use

Government must make up better policies to ensure better use of the E-library in Nigeria. Legislation such as the Copy right Act of Nigeria may not be enough to stop individuals from duplicating other people's work.

d) Better Computer Literacy Training Programmes

For individuals to be use E- Library Services, there must be accurate knowledge o how to use electronic devices like the computer. Individuals when trained should have acquired necessary skills, to retrieve information and other intellectual resource materials. In Schools, Administration can organize worships, seminars and conferences to talk about the computer literacy. Computer Courses should be taken by Individuals, Academics, or any Professional, to enable them have better knowledge on the use of technology.

e) Funding for Better Internet Service Network

In Nigeria, there is challenge of providing the best internet service. Nigerian Telecommunication Companies offer internet services which have been used in Schools, Business organizations, Firms, Non-government Organisation, Private or Public Enterprises. Yet, the internet services experiences technical hitches, hereby generating very poor service, to Consumers.

3.0   Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was a descriptive survey design. 150 well-structured questionnaires entitled the e-library as a tool for combatting low library usage among an institution's non-academic staff was used to gather information from randomly selected senior non-academic staff of the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro. A total number of 120 (80%) respondents responded to the questionnaire items. The questionnaires were administered and collected using research assistants. Results of findings were analyzed using frequency table and percentages. The questionnaire was based on three factors, "Agree, Disagree, Undecided" – ADU. The result analysis is done based on the output of those aforementioned parameters.

4.0   Result and Findings

Table 1: Frequency rate of the trend and impact of e-library resources among non-academic staff

S/N	Options	U		D		A	
1	Satisfaction level of users on educational materials online	21	17.5%	4	3.3%	95	79.2%
2	E-library/learning is the way forward	10	8.3%	5	4.2%	105	87.5%
3	It makes knowledge wider	7	5.8%	3	2.5%	110	91.7%
4	Improvement of user's self-study skill	9	7.5%	1	0.8%	110	91.7%

Source: Field Survey, July, 2022

Table 1 above shows the frequency rate of the trend and impact of e-library resources among non-academic staff. The data reveals that 79.2% of the respondents agreed with satisfactory level of users on educational materials online while 3.3% respondents disagreed. A significant 87.5% of the respondents also opined that E-library/learning is the way forward while 4.2% of the respondents disagreed with the point. 91.7% of the respondents also believed that e-library makes knowledge wider, 5.8% of the respondents were undecided while 2.5% disagreed. Finally, 91.7% of the respondents opined that e-library brings about improvement of user's self-study skill, while 0.8% of the respondents disagreed. The advantages, impacts, improvement, and facelift brought to acquisition of knowledge and seeking of information by e-library is numerous and impeccable. It can be simply stated that e-library is the future of knowledge acquisition.

Table 2: Frequency rate of the type of library currently in use by non-academic staff

S/N	Options	U		D		A	
1	World Digital Library	60	50%	15	12.5%	45	37.5%
2	Universal Digital Library	70	58.3%	20	16.7%	30	25%
3	Google Books	22	18.3%	0	0%	98	81.7%
4	Internet Archive	7	8.4%	2	1.7%	111	92.5%
5	Open Library	27	22.5%	25	20.8%	70	58.3%

Source: Field Survey, July, 2022

The data from Table 2 above shows that non-academic staff are not accustom to library resources online. It was apparent that majority of them sort for Internet Archive files and Google Books with 92.5% and 81.7% of the respondents respectively attesting to that fact. Only 58.3% of the respondents were aware of open library resources, while majority of the respondents did not know much about World Digital Library and Universal Digital Library with 37.5% and 25% of the respondents respectively attested to it. From the findings, it was discovered that it is required of librarians to preach the usefulness, carry out sensitisation and educate non-academia about e-library sources online.

Table 3: Frequency rate of the challenges faced by non-academic staff when using e-library resources

S/N	Options	U		D		A	
1	It is not succeeded always because of a lack of connectivity	21	17.5%	8	6.7%	91	75.8%
2	Erratic power supply	10	8.3%	8	6.7%	112	93.3%
3	Insufficient bandwidth	7	5.8%	18	15%	95	79.2%
4	Lack of technical IT knowledge by users	18	15%	7	5.8%	95	79.2%

Source: Field Survey, July, 2022

The data from Table 3 above shows that constant change of software and hardware is an issue that is yet to be addressed as 75.8% of the respondents believed e-library is not succeeded always because of a lack of connectivity. 93.3% of the respondents opined that erratic power supply is still a major difficulty towards smooth operation e-library. Insufficient bandwidth and lack of technical IT knowledge by library staff remain unresolved and needs proper consideration as 79.2% of the respondents stated that both challenges should be addressed. However, this study proffered solutions to the challenges stated above.

5.0   Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1   Conclusion

Library usage is on the low side, particularly among the non-academic staff. The best paradigm shift for the progression and acceptance of the library has been provided by information and communication technology (ICT). The e-library is becoming the right tool for tackling low library usage among the non-academic staff, as the results from the study made it apparent that the respondents are ready to embrace the change. It is of great importance that librarians brace themselves for the challenges at hand by teaching, sensitizing, and preaching the need for e-library usage and also educating them about the e-library platforms online and teaching the non-academic staff about the need to use it. Common challenges, such as power supply instability, insufficient bandwidth, and lack of technical IT knowledge by end-users, are something to be looked into. To this effect, the following recommendations were made.

5.2   Recommendations

i.   Nigerian institutions through their libraries should subscribe for more e- resources and databases that cover all courses ran by the institutions.

ii.   Administrators at educational institutions should ensure that the campus's electricity supply is stable so that these e-resources can be accessed.

iii. Non-academic staff can be encouraged to use e-resources by organizing training and workshop on how these e-resources that can access and use for their research interests.

iv.   Institutional libraries should also inform the university community whenever they acquire new databases and make electronic libraries conductive for their users.

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