

UTILIZATION OF E-LIBRARY BY UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES:

A Case of Bingham University

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Abstract

The e-library provides primary and secondary information electronically through communications networks and services which enables library users to directly access electronic data via telecommunications networks. This study attempted to find out the extent of use of e-library and the challenges faced by undergraduate students in Private University Libraries in Nigeria, using the case of Bingham University library. One hundred and fifty (150) undergraduate students out of a total of about One thousand five hundred (1,500) were randomly selected. Questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection; however, Interview and Observation were also applied where necessary. The University Library works in conjunction with the ICT unit to provide Electronic Library Services, giving the students and other staff users access to a wide range of rich academic resources, including the robust NUC virtual library. Although, the library web page is still under construction thus, students are required to physical be in the e-library to access numerous e-resources and online resources yet the students prefer not to patronize the e-library, rather they use the Wi-Fi network outside the library building. The study reveals some of the challenges in the e-library faced by students, with epileptic and slow Internet connections as some of the challenges.

KEYWORD: Bingham University, Undergraduate Students, Utilization, Internet, Electronic Library.

Introduction

Bingham University, Karu was established by the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) following its formal licensing by the National Universities Commission (NUC) on 5th January, 2005.

As the name implies, the University was named after one of the trio of pioneer Sudan Interior Missionaries, Roland Victor Bingham whose vision along with those of other founding fathers desired to produce committed Christians thus, the University emerged as a tool through which Christ-centered leaders would be produced. The

founding fathers intend to meet the soaring need for not only quality secular tertiary education but education that recognizes and integrates moral and spiritual values in the face of degenerating social decadence in Nigerian University campuses (Bingham University, 2013). Academic programs of Bingham University began in May 2006 at the Jos ECWA Theological Seminary temporary site and moved to its present permanent site two years after, precisely in March 2008 to Karu, Nasarawa State, Nigeria at the outskirts of Abuja, the Federal Capital City. The University has in place an ICT centre with a student portal for integrated services developed and maintained by the staff of the University's Computer Science Department. The University Library works in conjunction with the ICT unit to provide Electronic Library Services, giving the students and other staff users access to a wide range of academic resources, including the robust NUC virtual library. Although, the library web page is still under construction thus, students are required to physically be in the e-library to access e-resources and online resources. Bingham University Management is constantly working in collaboration with her partners and friends at home and abroad to ensure the library is up to date at all times.

The term undergraduate refers to a university student who is studying for their first degree. After attaining their first degree, the student can then pursue a Post-Graduate Degree which usually refers to a student who has completed their first degree and is studying for a higher qualification such as a master's degree (Dictionary.com, 2013). It further stated that, Undergraduate is the term used to define university students who have not yet completed their 4 years of study. Once they have earned an undergraduate degree, they can choose to enter the workforce, or continue with graduate

studies. In view of the ongoing, undergraduate refers to a student currently enrolled in pursuit of an undergraduate programme, usually a bachelor's degree. A graduate student is a student that has achieved an undergraduate degree. In other words, an undergraduate is someone who is attending university but has not yet earned a degree but is working towards a bachelor's degree. In Nigeria, undergraduate degrees (excluding Medicine, Medical Laboratory Science, Nursing, Engineering, Law and Architecture) are four-year-based courses. Medicine (MBBS) and Architecture normally take six years to complete studies while Medical Laboratory Science, Nursing, Law and Engineering courses take five years to complete studies, usually, all six years are taken to improve their chances.

Utilization of library and its resources is essential for the justification of the existence and survival of any university library. Bida (2011) opined that the major objectives of any library are to ensure that maximum use is made of its resources and services. He further explained that, this is so because no matter how rich a library collection may be, it is believed that if the users of such library are not able to gain access and use the library resources, the collection of the library is regarded as a waste. Unfortunately, some literatures have revealed that the access and utilization of Nigerian University libraries by the Undergraduate Students is generally low. The utilization of information resources in a library, especially e-resources is a function of how proper the resources are organised and made available for use. According to BBC English Dictionary (1992), utilization means the usefulness of something or making proper use of something in order to achieve a desired result. The primary aim and objective of a library or any information centre is to select, acquire, process, store and make available for clientele essential and

relevant information resources for easy retrieval. The utilization of the library and its resources is usually determined by using library statistics which shows the number of users in the library every hour or two depending on the library; and number of materials consulted and those actually borrowed for home reading.

The Internet has been described as information super highway of information infrastructure to emphasize the expectation that it would transform the way information is created, manipulated, stored, retrieved, transferred and utilized (Ehikhamenor, 2003). Yumba (1997) corroborated this as a powerful tool to search for, retrieve and disseminate information. He also reported that technology offers new opportunities for rapid communication and access to information worldwide as it is increasingly being used by all sectors of the society and this has made the resources of the world more accessible to ordinary people all over the world. The Internet is the fastest growing computer network with millions of users worldwide and has been found to assist users to easily obtain and share information available worldwide. According to Internet World Statistics 2005, Africa had an Internet User Growth Rate (IUGR) of 258.3% between 2000 and 2005, but this still accounted for only 1.7% of the world's Internet usage (Olalude, 2007). The Internet can be used to provide the following services: Electronic mail, Listserv, Newsgroups, File Transfer (FTP), Remote Login (using Telnet) etc. Olalude (2007) reported that the Internet is a powerful and efficient tool for searching, retrieving and disseminating information. It may be used for education, research, trade and commerce, entertainment, sports and news, communication such as email and discussion groups.

A library is an organized collection of items which may be in form of books,

journals, videos, CDROM etc. along with the services required to make them available to a given user group or groups. It can also be referred to as a place to get 'information' and a place to get help finding 'information'. The 'information' can be in physical or digital form. Recently, with the advent of information and communication technology (ICT), library resources have moved from the printed to electronic format; acquisition, storage and retrieval, and dissemination of library resources are now ICT driven. Library computerization which began in Nigerian universities or Africa in general in the early 1970s has brought about retrospective conversion of library resources into digital/electronic format, and re-invented the nature of access and use of library resources (Alabi, 1985; Ehikhamenor, 1990; Nkhoma, 2003; Omoniwa, 2001; Lawal and Ani, 2008). Various institutions have been working to develop an electronic library by diverse means, so there is no definition of electronic library in wide common use. Consequently, the term electronic library has been defined by many different people in many different ways yet saying the same thing. An e-library is a library in which the holdings are found in electronic stacks without any regard to a physical space or location. Omolaye, (2002) extended the definition of electronic library to include access to electronic resources in the university library not only through the Internet but also other electronic/digital networks such as campus network or Intranet, without the physical need of patrons (staff/students) visiting the library. It is a technological way of bringing together the resources of various libraries and information services in one place, so that users can find what they need quickly and easily (Riccio, 2001; Irokwe, 2001; Gapen, 1993). Hence, an electronic library (colloquially referred to as a digital library) is a library in which collections are stored in

electronic media formats (as opposed to print, microform, or other media) and accessible via computers. The electronic content may be stored locally, or accessed remotely via computer networks. Ya'u (2003) asserts that the e-library has an opportunity to address the paucity of teaching and research materials in the libraries of higher institutions in Nigeria as well as giving room for sharing of research outputs with the global community amongst the institutions and the local researchers.

Nevertheless, Bradley (1999) in a related work stated the characteristics of e-library as thus:

- They use the expertise of information professionals and subject experts in collecting and Organizing web information resources;
- Information is checked for authority to validate the source;
- Emphasis is on the content of an information source rather than its location and;
- The information is current and sometimes valued-added.

The e-library can be referred to as a child of necessity arising from the need to use technologies in accessing the world information. Akst (2003), proposes that the future of libraries — and of information — is digital. Lyman and Varian (2003), estimate that "the world's total yearly production of print, film, optical, and magnetic content would require roughly 1.5 billion gigabytes of storage. Therefore, they believe that soon it will be technologically possible for an average person to access virtually all recorded information. There is a need to access information globally through the internet because we are now in the period of information explosion. In order for the universities in the world in general and

Nigeria in particular to function effectively and efficiently, it is necessary to have an e-library system. With e-library, the quality of academic library collections will be bolstered up, staff and students will be able to access databases for teaching and research. Also, accessibility to recent publications will be enhanced. Okebukola (2002) is of the view that e-library would improve the quality of teaching and research in higher institutions through the provision of current e-books, journal and other library resources. This will enhance scholarship, research and lifelong learning through the establishment of permanent access to shared virtual archival collections.

In view of the foregoing fact, if students who are the major users of the library resources fail to maximize the e-library, then this will put student's personal and individual search for knowledge and understanding at stake, which will also result to poor academic performance of these students in both internal and external professional examinations as a result of shallow knowledge-level. (V.N. Nwachukwu, personal communication, August 19, 2013). In addition, this will also increased the level of examination malpractice amongst undergraduate students because these students do not use essential information resources provided by in the e-library to enhance their knowledge level. And if our universities continue to condone and produce half baked graduates who are the leaders of tomorrow, then there is the likelihood that the society and country at large will be in jeopardy since the country's high level man-power is invariably a potent driver of the country's economic, political and social development.

Misconceptions of the electronic library

The term electronic library is used as a synonym with digital or virtual library (Magara, 2002; Okebukola, 2002; Rosenberg, 2005). It is commonly thought that an electronic library enables anyone, at any time or place, to access a library's enormous book collection by using the Internet. It is even believed that one can use all the books in a library's collection without actually going to the library. But these notions are only half-truths. It is true that an electronic library is aimed at making it possible for anyone, at any time or place, to access digitized resources over the Internet. It is only natural, however, that the contents which can be used over an electronic library are limited to those contents which have been digitized at the library so they can be relayed through a network. The process of digitization is a major one, involving much labor and expense. Libraries have huge book collections and it is not possible to digitize all these resources. It is a huge misconception, therefore, to think that anyone, at any time or place, can access any book in a library. What is more, most of the books in a library's collection are protected by copyright. Electronic libraries must honor copyright and in digitizing and providing information, ample attention must be given to this copyright.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to investigate the level of adoption and usage of the e-library by undergraduate students in Private University Libraries in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. To assess the level of knowledge of the existence of an e-library;
2. Determine the extent to which the e-library is used by undergraduate students;
3. Identify the problems associated with its utilization.

Methodology

The target population for this study was undergraduate students in Private University Libraries in Nigeria using Bingham University Library a case study. Some variables like gender, age, level and department were ignored so long as the students were undergraduates. The total number of undergraduate students are about 1,500 and 150 were randomly selected. Sequel to the fact that the population is too large to be covered for this study, the researcher randomly selected **10%** from the total students' population (1,500), thus forming a total sample size of 150. Consequently the total number of questionnaires distributed was 150, and the total number returned were 102 representing 100% of the total respondent. A brief one on one Interview was also conducted alongside the questionnaire to obtain more information not covered in the questionnaire, and to also clarify few issues. Observation was further employed to assess the infrastructural activities such as computer systems, network connectivity, and activities of e-librarian as par assisting users meet their needs.

Results and Discussion

The data collected were analyzed using percentage frequencies based on a number of variables. These variables include demographic information about the respondents, awareness of the existence of e-library, utilization of the e-library, duration and purpose for using the e-library and the problems associated with its utilization.

Awareness of the existence of an e-library

When talking about utilization of e-library, one question that readily comes to mind is, can anyone utilise what he/she does not have knowledge of its existence? Awareness is a pre-requisite to subsequent usage. Hence, without doubt Table 1 reveals that majority of the respondents (82.4%) are completely

aware of the existence of the e-library but are not satisfied with the functionality of the e-library due to its poor services as par network connection. The remaining 17.6% are likely to be newcomers (100level and direct entry students) who resumed after orientation week thus reason for their ignorance of the existence of an e-library.

Utilization of e-library

The study showed that bulk of the respondents (73.5%) hardly ever use the e-library (Table 2), most likely because they feel frustrated by the speed and erratic network connection and they do not see the need in using the available Intra-electronic resources in the e-library. This is an undisputable evidence that undergraduate students prefer the Internet sought resources than the Intranet sought resources i.e. e-granary, probably because they ignorantly think that only when you go online, you cannot get current and relevant materials. The remaining 26.5% are likely to be those who have decided to use the available Intra-electronic resources in the e-library.

Purpose for Utilization of e-library

The study sought to find out the reasons for using the e-library and the respondents were allowed to pick as many as were applicable. The result showed that the e-library is used mostly for email and academic information (Table 3). However, the e-library is also used for online chats and discussion, news and teleconferencing by a minority (less than 25%).

Duration of Internet search per access time

It is disappointing to observe from Table 4 that more than half of the respondents (73.5%) normally use the e-library for less than 30mins. This can be attributed to the fact that the Internet connection in the e-library is slow and epileptic. The outstanding respondents that covers 26.5%

spend more than 30mins using the e-library (Table 4). This percentage of respondents is likely to be using the e-granary and other e-resources that do not require the Internet or perhaps are patronizing the Microsoft office software on the systems in the e-library, to do their work.

Challenges militating against the utilization of e-library

In Table 5, the respondents identified slow Internet connection and epileptic network service as the major problems discouraging them from utilizing the e-library. The major problem which is slow Internet connection is as a result of dependence of the e-library on the university Internet facilities managed by the university's ICT. From all indication, the university's bandwidth is small thus subsequently leads to slow connection when many users link up to the Internet from various points like; offices, hostels, classrooms, laboratories etc.

Inadequate computer system was also listed as a major challenge. Perhaps this can be attributed to a misconception about e-library, where it is believed that one can use all the books in a library's collection via Wi-Fi without actually going to the library, thus the management provided limited numbers of computer systems since the wireless network is functional for students to use their personal computers (PC) / laptops. But really, can all the library holdings be accessed wirelessly from any point outside the e-library, since the library's web page is still under construction? How about during network down-times, can users access the e-library collections from outside? What about the contents in the e-granary housed only in the library's Intra-server? Copyrighted materials that cannot be uploaded for public use?

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study revealed that the undergraduate students are aware of the existence of e-library and its purpose, but are not using it optimally as a result of slow and erratic network. It is therefore recommended that the institution investigated in this study should upgrade its bandwidth, or at best if possible provide the library with its own Internet facilities. Libraries always have low patronage when they are not adequately equipped to effectively provide the range of services entrusted on them (Tommy,2009; Isak, 2009). These stated services utmostly include provision of information resources either physically or electronically using the Internet.

Finally, from the analysis and discussion of the findings, it can be said that this study has also revealed that an inadequate computer system discourages these students from patronizing the e-library. Aina (2004) stressed that in order for the library to achieve the objective of encouraging the student in their personal and individual search for knowledge and understanding, the libraries should be able to acquire and retain adequate and new sources of information. This buttresses the need for more adequate and upgraded computer systems in the e-library.

Table 1: Awareness of the existence of an e-library

Item	Response (Agree)	Response (Disagree)
I am aware the University has a Main Library	92(90.1%)	10(9.8%)
I am aware the University Library has an e-library division/unit	84(82.4)	18(17.6%)
I am aware the e-library is functional	78(76.4%)	24(23.5%)
I am aware it is opened to all registered users of the library	75(73.5%)	27(26.4%)

Table 2: Utilization of e-library

Item	Response (Agree)	Response (Disagree)
I often use the e-library	10(9.8%)	92(90.1%)
I seldom use the e-library	75(73.5%)	27(26.5%)
I do not use the e-library	17(16.7%)	85(83.3%)

Table 3: Purpose for Utilization of e-library

Item	Response (Agree)	Response (Disagree)
I use the e-library for E-Mailing	22(21.6%)	80(78.4%)
I use the e-library for Academic Information	87(85.2%)	15(14.7%)
I use the e-library for General Browsing	0(0%)	102(100%)
I use the e-library for News	10(9.8%)	92(90.1%)
I use the e-library for Entertainment & Sports	10(9.8%)	92(90.1%)
I use the e-library for Chat & Discussion	5(4.9%)	97(95.1%)
Others, if any specify.....	0(0%)	102(100%)

Table 4: Duration of Internet search per access time

Item	Response (Agree)	Response (Disagree)
I normally use the e-library for less than 30mins	75(73.5%)	27(26.5%)
I normally use the e-library for 30-59mins	19(18.6%)	83(81.4%)
I normally use the e-library for 60-89mins	5(4.9%)	97(95.1%)
I normally use the e-library for 90-119mins	3(2.9%)	99(97.1%)
I normally use the e-library for over 120	0(0%)	102(100%)

Table 5: Challenges militating against the utilization of e-library

Item	Response (Agree)	Response (Disagree)
Inadequate computer systems, discourages me from using the e-library	89(87.2%)	13(12.7%)
Un-conducive environment, discourages me from using the e-library	0(0%)	102(100%)
Slow Internet speed, discourages me from using the e-library	100(98%)	2(1.9%)
Epileptic network service, discourages me from using the e-library	99(97%)	3(2.9%)
Unfriendly attitude of the e-librarian, discourages me from using the e-library	2(1.9%)	100(98%)

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