

A SURVEY OF INTERNET USE BY TEACHING STAFF AT THE FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, NASARAWA, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the extent of awareness and use of internet facilities/resources by teaching staff in the polytechnic cafe at the Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa, Nigeria. A quantitative research approach was adopted in the study and survey as the research method. Data were collected in the survey through designed questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that majority of the respondents were aware of availability of polytechnic cafe and were extensively using internet facilities/resources in the polytechnic cafe basically to support their academic/research activities. A number of factors were identified in the survey as impeding effective use of internet facilities/resources in the polytechnic cafe and these include slow response rate of the internet, lack of workstations, lack of skills on internet use and inadequate seats at the polytechnic cafe for the users. The paper recommended that the level of funding of the polytechnic cafe should be increased by the polytechnic administration in order to basically increase the bandwidth of internet connectivity in the polytechnic café.

Keywords: Awareness, electronic information resources, internet use, teaching staff,

INTRODUCTION

The information and communication technology (ICT) revolution is sweeping through the world and the gale has even caught up with

developing countries (Nigeria). Information and communication technologies (ICTs) have introduced new methods of teaching and conducting research in Nigerian academic institutions. The ICTs have given rise to new modes of organizing educational programmes and concepts in the teaching process as well as the remodelling of the roles played by different stakeholders in the educational development in Nigeria. The internet is a basic component of ICT that has provided wider access to information to support teaching and research in tertiary institutions including polytechnics in Nigeria. The internet is a network of millions of computers that are globally connected in a way that allows other computers to access information on them. The internet contains wide range of information resources across all academic disciplines. While higher/tertiary institutions in developed countries provide free or inexpensive internet access to their staff, the situation is different in developing countries, particularly in Nigeria where access to the internet is relatively expensive. Besides, high cost of internet access, internet connectivity in Nigeria is characterized with low bandwidth and response rate.

Today libraries are undergoing transformation in collection development towards meeting the changing information needs and seeking behaviours of their patrons from the print to electronic information resources. The remarkable growth of electronic information resources within the past two decades has made libraries to provide electronic information services to their patrons. Thus, library users such as teaching staff in Nigerian polytechnics can access relevant library resources (electronic books, electronic journals, online databases etc.) on the internet 24 hours without visiting the physical library. Thus, the internet is now considered a versatile tool in teaching and research in Nigerian polytechnics

LITERATURE REVIEW

Razaand and Upadhyay (2006) examined the usage of internet resources such as the e-journals by researchers at Aligarh Muslim University (AMU). They used questionnaire method to find out extent of awareness, purpose and place used by research scholars to access internet resources (e-journals). The survey revealed that all the researchers were aware of internet resources (e-journals) that are accessible in the AMU. Many research scholars were consulting e-journals from their departmental laboratories and computer centers, not only for research purposes but also to update their own knowledge. Some problems such as lack of training and slow downloading of e-resources were found in the study as impeding the use of the internet in the survey.

Asefeh and Nosrat (2007) investigated the extent of awareness and use of digital resources among students in Isfahan University of Medical Sciences. A questionnaire was designed and used in data collection in the survey. Users of the Medical libraries affiliated to Isfahan University of Medical Sciences were taken as respondents in the survey. The results indicated that 70.0 percent of respondents were aware of digital resources that are accessible via Central Library LAN (Local Area Network), and these resources were used by most (69.0 percent) respondents in the survey. Furthermore 62.0 percent respondents were aware of offline databases in the Central Library. Infrequent periodic orientation and lack of education on use of offline databases and fewer terminals connected to the server in the Central library impeded effective use of digital resources especially the offline databases among the respondents. Other constraints reported in the study were low response rate of the internet and shortage of hardware facilities.

Kumar and Kaur (2004) explored the extent of internet use by staff and students in Shaheed BhagatSingh College of Engineering and Technology. They found that the extent of internet use by the respondents was low and that internet was mostly used for academic purpose. A study by Luambano and Nawe (2004) showed that students who were respondents in the survey used internet essentially for communication with friends and relatives less than for academic purposes and the level of students' access to the internet was low because at the time of the study, computers with internet facilities were inadequate. Mulla and Chandrashekara (2006) reported that the teachers, research scholars and students in higher institutions use internet to give them up-to-date information in the society. The research scholars of Shivaji University, Kanpur were aware of electronic resources that are accessible in the university library and basically use the internet for research and communication purposes (Bansode & Pujar, 2008).

Herring (2002) conducted citation analysis of research articles from scholarly electronic journals published in 1999-2002, to know the scholars using electronic resources and the type /subject area of online resources that are being referenced. The researcher found that online resources are increasingly important for scholarly research. Yang (2003) explored the attitude of pre-service elementary educators towards internet use, internet self-efficacy, and internet anxiety and their relationship. The respondents of this survey were all elementary pre-service students enrolled in Core College of Education courses at Idaho State University during 2003. The findings of the paper revealed that an early and frequent use of the internet

across the teacher education curricula was useful in promoting students' internet use and self-efficacy.

Choukhande and Kumar (2004) studied the information needs and use pattern among faculty and research scholars at the Amravati University. They used a questionnaire method with random sampling technique to collect the data. It was found that users had difficulty in searching information through electronic sources, and they need skill to use the available sources in the library. Crawford and Daye (2008) explored the use of electronic services by students at Glasgow Caledonian University Library. The results of the study showed that only 18 per cent of respondents used CD-ROMs while 13 per cent used online databases.

Kanwal and Ameen (2008) surveyed the barriers to collection-sharing among the well-established university libraries in Pakistan. Twenty chief/head librarians from five major cities in Pakistan were interviewed. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted at the librarians' workplaces during 2003 to 2004. The results of the study revealed that various technical, procedural, psychological, and behavioural barriers in achieving planned and meaningful collection-sharing programmes.

Jagboro (2003) conducted a study on internet use in Nigerian Universities and found that both postgraduate and undergraduate students of the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife used the CD-Rom databases and the internet for academic purpose. Similarly, in a survey of cyber café in Delta State of Nigeria, Adunni and Adeniran (2003), found that 77.8 percent of users of the cyber café were students. This present study is intended to fill the research gap on internet use in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To determine the extent of awareness of the availability of the polytechnic cafe by teaching staff in the Federal Polytechnic, Nasarawa, Nigeria,
2. To determine the extent of use of internet facilities/resources in the polytechnic cafe by teaching staff ,
3. To determine the frequency of use of internet facilities/resources in the polytechnic cafe by teaching staff,
4. To determine the internet experience of teaching staff at the polytechnic cafe,

5. To determine mode of training on internet use by teaching staff in the polytechnic,
6. To determine the purpose of using internet facilities/resources by teaching staff in the polytechnic, and
7. To determine factors affecting internet use among teaching staff in the polytechnic cafe.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A quantitative research approach was adopted for the study and a survey as research method. The teaching staff were used as respondents in the survey. The population of the teaching staff in the polytechnic was 487 and a sample size of 150 teaching staff was used in the survey. A structured questionnaire was designed and used for data collection in the study. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: section one was designed to capture demographic variables of the respondents and section two captured data on internet use. The study was a cross-sectional survey and was conducted in February 2015. A random sampling technique was used in the survey and 150 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents in their offices by one of the researchers. The respondents were voluntarily requested to participate in the survey. A total of 96 validly completed questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents and used for data analysis. This represents a response rate of 64.0 percent which was considered high for data analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic variables

The results of the demographic variables in the study revealed that majority of respondents (83.0 percent) were male and 17.0 percent were female. The respondents were categorised into different age ranges, it was found that most respondents were within the age range of 40-49 years and only a few were less than 30 years (table 1).

Table 1: Age of respondents

Age (year)	%
Less than 30	8.3
31-39	27.1
40-49	43.8
50 and above	20.8

Ogundipe (2005), is of the opinion that research links the professional school and the field of professional practice. It provides much of the needed expert knowledge and the leadership for the development of the profession. In the field of librarianship, research imparts skills and competences for a productive workforce and engenders an increase in the store of knowledge as a means to pursue the task of improving the services and resources of libraries. Over the years, librarians have tenaciously propagated the academic status for the profession. Consequently, they have fully embraced the academic tenets of research and publication. Ogundipe (2005) further adds that the standards and numbers of local journals in developing countries are improving because of the increased availability of higher educational institutions generally and the academic staff (including librarians) are increasingly seeking avenues to publish their thoughts and efforts.

Understood in this context, the hypotheses of the present study which is that there has been a significant increase in LIS publications output within the last decade is not farfetched. With the obvious advantages of improved facilities like desktop publishing, and other advanced technologies for publishing, increasing number of librarians arising from the increasing number of tertiary institutions, library schools, state chapters and sections of NLA and the pressure of academic status, the picture becomes clearer.

Publication Outlets for Librarians:

Research publications by Librarians take many forms, chief among which are journals, books, conference papers/reports and secondary publications like indexes, catalogues, abstracts and bibliographies. Ogbomo (2010) lists various types of publications including newsletters, journals, bulletins, fact sheets, reports, summaries, guides, video recordings, conference proceedings, books, bibliographic and technical reports among publications outlets available to librarians. It further subdivides journals into three broad categories namely scholarly journals, popular magazines and trade publications and concludes that of all the listed publications outlets, journals are the most preferred.

Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) add reference materials, patents, and manuals to the list of publications outlets available to librarians and scholars but stress that journals and other periodicals are the most regularly sought after. The reasons for this preference are not far-fetched. Journals serve as the platform for the speedy and timely dissemination of knowledge. This does not suggest that other forms of scholarly publications are less

important or useful. However, being published at closer intervals, journals carry more current information, are cheaper and faster to produce, review and update, thereby ensuring continuous documentation of research.

Therefore although books and other forms of scholarly publications form a veritable scholarly communication outlet, there has developed around the referred journal, a high level preference therefore giving it a place of central importance. Feather, (1998) remarks that electronic or online publishing is derived more or less from the traditional print publication and works in much the same way. The e-journal has equally carved a niche for itself as an effective, practical and speedy means of creating and disseminating knowledge supported and accessed by the internet and computer.

Problems of availability and accessibility:

Hitherto, the problem of publication for librarians and academics had been the low level of publication output in all formats and disciplines referred to by Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) as "**book famine**". In as much as the publications output of Nigerian academics (including librarians) continues to lag far behind those of the developed economies, yet the fact cannot be denied that, arising from the indices already highlighted, there has been an appreciable and progressive increase in educational publishing and in Library and Information Science in the last decade. The earlier cited study by Mohammed (2008) buttresses this assertion.

There has arisen a new challenge however, that the bulk of these publications remain unavailable and inaccessible to the majority of those who need them. The information sources are not widely distributed, circulated or even advertised. The study by Ogbomo (2010) reveals that more than half of the study population lacked knowledge of the journals in which their colleagues are publishing. Therefore the information which these publications contain remains un-disseminated and unavailable, thereby negating the very essence of research. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) agree that research and publication remains the quintessential function of academics, and that the publication function would rest mainly upon the University Press and the University Library. Sadly, the days of the vibrant and robustly flourishing University Press seem to be over. As a result, even the research of scholars published in local and overseas journals rarely get to the university libraries which are the acclaimed principal carriers of information materials. The position of this study is that it is not enough to publish. Research publications output from academics in tertiary institutions must have impact on the society and the only way to achieve this

is that they are made available to those that need them, through the University Library.

Many factors are identified by Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) for the unavailability and inaccessibility of publications which include: sales and distribution issues like inadequate distribution agents and agencies, irregularity and inconsistency of publications, undeveloped technologies, poor transportation and mailing facilities, administrative bureaucracy, poor funding for libraries, lack of coordination and bibliographic instruments. Others are insufficient promotional strategies for announcing new publications and documenting all publications in print, unsatisfactory review media and non-compliance with state and national legal deposit laws. Mutula and Nakitto (2002) concur that distribution and marketing are major problems of publishing in Africa due to poor economy, rural populace and limited facilities. Lack of bibliographic instruments appears to have become a recurring decimal in the Nigerian Publishing Industry. The task of identifying, locating and accessing the nation's publications output becomes a daunting one. The absence of a consistent distribution system leaves so much to be desired in terms of the availability and accessibility of LIS research publications. The essence of research is that the findings are made available to users and stakeholders. Failure to do so means that this essence is defeated. The electronic journal on the other hand, though offering instantaneous access, is effective only if users have network access and can afford the cost. As Feather (1998) put it, technology has improved the potential for access although this access is restricted by absence of technical skills, technological infrastructure and financial capacity.

Methodology

The study adopted the survey method. The population was made up of fifty two librarians and from five the academic, special and public libraries in Abia State namely; Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, National Root Crops Research Institute Umudike, Abia State University Uturu, Abia State Polytechnic, Aba and Abia State Library Board Umuahia. The data collection instrument was the structured questionnaire titled "Output, Availability and Accessibility of Library and Information Science Publications in libraries in Abia state" (OAALISP).

The distribution of the population of the study was as follows: eight faculty members, ten librarians from the Abia State University, Uturu, ten librarians and five faculty members from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture,

Umudike, six librarians from the National Roots Crops Research Institute, Umudike, six librarians from the Abia State Library Board, Umuahia, (ASLIB) and seven from the Abia State Polytechnic, Aba. A total of fifty copies (96.2%) of the instrument were returned and used for the analysis, using descriptive statistical method of frequency counts and percentage.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF DATA

The data generated from the data collection instrument are presented in the tables below. The Likert type scale was adopted for the scoring.

Table 1: Respondents' assessment of LIS research publication output

S/N		Total	SA	A	D	SD	Total agreements		Total disagreement	
							F	%	F	%
1.	LIS research publications have increased in the last 10 years (2005-2014).	50	40	6	4	-	46	92	4	8
2.	I have published more in the ten years study period than before	50	30	10	5	5	40	80	10	20
3.	The establishment of more library schools has resulted in increased LIS publications	50	30	6	10	4	36	72	14	28
4.	Pressure of academic status has motivated librarians to publish more	50	20	20	6	4	40	80	10	20
5.	ICT has made publishing easier	50	10	30	10	-	40	80	10	20
6.	The proliferation of local journals has provided more outlets for publishing	50	20	25	4	1	45	90	5	10
	Total							82.33		17.67

Table 1 indicates that 82.33% of the respondents agree that the study period has recorded an increase in LIS research publications output while 17.67% disagree.

Table 2: Respondents' perception of publication outlets

S/N		Total	SA	A	D	SD	Total agreements		Total disagreement	
							F	%	F	%
1.	I prefer to publish in core LIS journals	50	30	10	8	2	40	80	10	20
2.	I prefer to publish in Information Science related journals	50	10	20	15	5	30	60	20	40
3.	I prefer to publish in core LIS books	50	10	20	12	8	30	60	20	40
4.	I prefer to publish in LIS related books	50	6	10	20	14	16	32	34	68
5.	My preferred publication outlets are general conference proceedings and reports	50	20	10	10	10	30	60	20	40
6.	I prefer to publish in core LIS conference proceedings and reports	50	20	20	8	2	40	80	10	20
	Total							62		38

The data presented in Table 2 reveals that 62% of the respondents prefer journals and other periodicals as publication outlets while 38% would prefer to publish in other outlets.

Table 3: Respondents' assessment of the extent of Availability of current LIS publications

S/N		N	SA	A	D	SD	Total agreements		Total disagreement	
							F	%	F	%
1.	Current LIS research publications are readily available in my library	50	5	5	20	20	10	20	40	80
2.	Colleagues readily deposit copies of their research publications to the library	50	1	5	20	24	6	12	44	88
3.	My library purchases publications authored by librarians in her employ	50	-	1	40	9	1	2	49	98
4.	I am abreast of the research efforts and publications of my colleagues	50	3	7	20	20	10	20	40	80
5.	I assess current LIS research publications from personal collections of colleagues	50	3	5	12	30	8	16	42	84
6.	LIS publications output are advertised on the NLA website	50	5	5	25	15	10	20	40	80
								15		85

The data presented and analyzed in table 3 shows that 15 % of the respondents agree that LIS research publications are readily available and accessible to them while 85% disagree. In other words the level of availability of LIS research publications is rated 15%.

Discussion and Conclusion

At 82.33% of positive responses, the position of the study which is that the research output of librarians is on the increase is empirically demonstrated and more so with respect to journal publications which mop up 68% of preferred publications output of librarians. This finding supports those of previous studies, already cited, including Powell, Bakar and Mika as cited by Ogbomo (2010), who assert that librarians are critical consumers of research literature as this enables them to provide information services and resources to researchers in other fields. The delimitation of the study to a ten year study period and Abia state is only for logistic reasons and a similar study can be replicated in a different time frame and geographical location. Paradoxically, in spite of these statistics, these publications are largely unavailable and thus inaccessible to librarians. The extent of availability in the University libraries is a dismal 15% in the university libraries of the study. This translates to very low extent of availability, which translates to very low extent of accessibility. The respondents are largely unaware of new and recent publications by their colleagues and consequently cannot access the information they carry. This finding is in tandem with the finding of by Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) who identified several factors for the unavailability and inaccessibility of publications which include: sales and distribution issues like inadequate distribution agents and agencies, irregularity and inconsistency of publications, undeveloped technologies, poor transportation and mailing facilities, administrative bureaucracy, poor funding for libraries, lack of coordination and bibliographic instruments. It also supports the conclusion reached by some other

Scholars, including the study by Ogbomo (2010) which revealed that more than half of the study population lacked knowledge of the journals in which their colleagues are publishing. Mutula and Nakitto (2002) concur that distribution and marketing are major problems of publishing in Africa due to poor economy, rural populace and limited facilities.

Librarians are therefore, found to publish, mainly for academic recognition and career advancement rather than to build a strong bibliographic base and solve problems of operations, practice and study of LIS. As a result, most of their publications probably end up in their personal collections, out of reach, unavailable and inaccessible to other stakeholders. Makheviee (2009) emphasizes that the major aim of academic journal is to report original research, making it available to other scholars in the discipline, and that the non availability of periodical titles in libraries pose a serious problems to further research.

Therefore, the increase of LIS research publications in Nigeria in the past decade alone is not an index for the availability of the said publications in the relevant academic libraries. Librarians' motivation to publish especially arising from the demands of academic status should be matched with a need to make these publications available and thus accessible to the relevant stakeholders; including librarians and students. University and Library managements should put in place, a framework to acquire and collect the research publications emanating from librarians in their domains for the purposes of accessibility. On the other hand librarians should be mandated to deposit specified copies of their research publications with their or other designated university libraries to ensure that they are available and accessible and the essence of research is not defeated.

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