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USAGE OF DIGITAL RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE SERVICE DELIVERY BY ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN GOMBE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study investigated the usage of digital resources by academic librarians in university libraries for effective service delivery in Gombe State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to determine the extent of usage of digital resources by academic librarians and to examine various challenges involved in the usage of digital resources in university libraries in Gombe State. The study adopted descriptive research design. Population of the study comprised 45 practicing academic librarians in university libraries in Gombe State. The study used census sampling technique hence there was no sampling. Questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. Data collected for the research were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency distribution, percentage, mean and standard deviation. The finding of the study showed that usage of digital resources by academic librarians in university libraries in Gombe State, Nigeria was effective. The finding also revealed that the use of digital resources made users to become more technology friendly. The study concludes that the use of digital resources encourage learning and research activities. The study recommends that the library management should strategize on how to deploy the use of digital resources in their libraries for effective services delivery. It also recommends, frequent and sustainable trainings, workshops and seminars on the usage of digital resources in these libraries.

Keywords: *Digital Resources, Digital Usage, Academic Librarians, Academic Libraries, Gombe State.*

Introduction

Digital resources are those information resources that can only be accessed by the use of computers and other ICT devices. These materials may require the use of a peripheral device directly connected to a computer or computer network (Hallam, 2016). There are different types of digital resources such as Digital video discs (DVD), the Internet, Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), electronic books, electronic journals and electronic indexes (Hallam, 2016). Digital resources are materials that can be conceived and created digitally or by converting analogue materials to a digital format (State Library of Victoria, 2018).

Usage of Digital Resources by Academic Librarians

There is a substantial increase in the usage of digital resources for social, political and economic development as well as advancing research in libraries worldwide (Reynolds, 2016). The use of various digital resources has enabled academic librarians to provide current and up-to-date information services to their users. With the rapid use of digital resources in academic libraries, sharing information has become an interactive process for academic librarians. The use of digital resources has made users more technologically friendly. Besides, Bajpai et al. (2016) in an attempt to explain the use of digital resources placed much emphasis on the aspect of the use of digital resources for electronic research. The researchers maintain that digital research is a

technique in which a user may use different digital resources such as the Internet, computer technology and multimedia to replace the conventional information system. Libraries also adopt modern digital resources which make information services in electronic format available to users (Bajpai et al., 2016). This explains why in this modern era of digital technology, e-books, e-journal and other digital resources play prominent role in libraries because of their relative advantage for public use. This offers greater opportunity for mass access and delivery of information services.

Many empirical studies have indicated that the use of digital resources in the library is an effective way of increasing access and convenience to library services. Vijayakumar and Gopalakrishnan (2016) exclusively demonstrated the effectiveness and usage of digital resources in universities. Their results suggest that users of digital resources were satisfied with the services of the libraries and librarians. Kumar and Gopalakrishnan (2016) also stated that digital resources are important in the design of modern libraries because of their relative convenience of usage. Both Naick and Bachalla (2016); Israel and Edesiriu (2017) concurred that digital resources facilitate access to relevant and current information for learning and research development. While agreeing with the position of other empirical studies on the relevance of digital resources in academic libraries, Sujatha and Rao (2016) posits that the performance of tasks in libraries is very straightforward with effective usage of digital resources. They added that the use of digital resources in libraries makes exploration of new features by trial and error easy and simple. Moreover, Hussain (2019) added that digital resources have a high propensity of attracting new users to libraries and satisfying their specific needs.Thus digital resources are invaluable research tools that complement the print-based resources in traditional library setting (Oak, 2016). With the digital resources, the content of library resources is still universal in coverage as user satisfaction remained invariably high. Presently, academic librarians are using digital resources to organize and diffuse, manage digital material and provide information services (Reynolds, 2016). However, studies have shown that the inability of librarians to effectively use digital resources to provide effective library services is still a challenge in Nigeria (Okezie & Onyekweodiri, 2016).

Challenges of Usage of Digital Resources in Academic Libraries in Gombe

Literature review reveals numerous challenges associated with the usage of digital resources among academic librarians which have led to a wide gap in the way information is delivered with digital resources (Odu & Omosigho, 2017). These challenges are as follows:

Lack of digital resources competency: some academic librarians in Nigeria, lack the competencies and skills needed to take on the challenging role of the 4th industrial revolution. They are averse to technology and perceive the application of Internet use, computers, electronic books (e-books), electronic journals (e-journal), index collections of online journal articles, reference works, digital collections and databases as a threat. This being the case, they are reluctant to embrace new technology. Adamou (2017) remarked that many librarians lack confidence in the face of increasing digital resource usage. This situation retards service delivery and productivity

Lack of Digital Technology Awareness: Lack of awareness and understanding of new digital technologies such as mobile Internet access, cloud-based computing, the 'Internet of Things, digital data, artificial intelligence and the increasing computer-driven decision-making mechanism and other forms of automation has become a big challenge for librarians in recent times (IFLA, 2017; UNESCO, 2017).

Digital literacy evolved as a result of the change that has continually taken place in a technology-driven environment. Librarians require awareness and understanding of digital technologies as well as the ability to interact with these technologies for decision-making and service delivery (Baharuddin, et al., 2016). Amid these changes occasioned by digital technologies, academic librarians are expected to continuously upgrade their knowledge and equip themselves with digital technology skills to serve twenty-first-century library users. According to Echezona and Chigbu (2015), a lack of digital technology awareness is still observable among librarians in developing countries including Nigeria with digital technology skills for proper use.

Poor Usage of Digital Resources: Poor knowledge of ICT infrastructure and affordable online access, absence of grounded digital skills and information searching behaviour are factors responsible for academic librarians' low use of digital resources. Howe (2016) identified problems in the usage of digital resources in Nigeria to include inadequate digital skills among staff and users, low levels of information literacy, media literacy and computer literacy. Poor usage of digital resources occasioned by prohibitive costs of ICTs equipment, accessories, operations and services in developing countries is prevalent among academic librarians according to Davies (2016). However, research has demonstrated that the differences in the level of digital literacy and the use of digital resources depend mainly on age and education level, while the influence of gender is decreasing (Rahman, 2015). Among young people in particular, digital literacy is high in its operational dimension (rapidly moving through hypertext, familiarity with different kinds of online resources) with the skills to critically evaluate content found online show a deficit (Adamou, 2017).

Poor Internet connectivity: In a digital library, the Internet plays a significant role in the provision of digital information but equitable access to the Internet in Nigerian academic libraries is yet to be realized. The existing Internet connectivity is low. Ayoku and Okafor (2015) stated that many constraints led to poor Internet development in Africa, one of which is the initial capital outlay to install Internet facilities. This is because almost all the African countries according to Ogochukwu (2015) are experiencing huge debts and foreign exchange required to purchase the facilities. Raju (2014) further asserted that there is inefficient telecommunication and power supply to serve as a springboard for the development of Internet services in Africa.

Inadequate power supply: The Nigerian electricity power supply is in deplorable condition. There is constant power outage which frustrates effective provision of digital information services. Most libraries rely on alternative sources of electricity such as power generating machines to function. However, these machines are fraught with problems of maintenance, and high cost of diesel and petrol. The resultant effect has been the provision of epileptic services. According to Anyira and Nwabueze (2011); Anyim, (2018), the pangs of the power supply crisis in the country have found expression in the expenditure profile, as most organizations expend a huge amount of money providing alternative power supply. These alternatives include generators, solar systems, green technology, and turbine gas. Effective information service delivery cannot thrive in this type of environment.

Poor funding: Funding is critical to effective management and service provision in academic libraries. Money is needed for the acquisition of information and communication technology equipment, Internet subscription, staff training, emolument and maintenance. Ezeani and Ekere (2016) observed that many universities in Nigeria are now facing financial difficulties, which hinder the training of staff to enable librarians, acquire skills needed for the use of the Internet and other digital resources in libraries. Rose, Eldridge and Chapin (2015) also maintain that many academic librarians in developing countries, especially African countries, are still facing challenges of adequate training to facilitate the integration of digital literacy skills with traditional skills needed for information service delivery.

Inadequate Digital Literacy Training: According to Uwaifo and Azonobi (2014), poor digital literacy of librarians resulting from inadequate training has hindered the effective use of digital resources in academic libraries. Many academic librarians in African countries particularly in Nigeria still find it difficult to integrate digital literacy skills with the traditional method of information service delivery due to poor training (Rose, Eldridge and Chapin, 2015). Digital literacy training is important for academic librarians to understand new technologies as they emerge, identify their opportunities in them and manage the risks (Ibrahim, 2015). Training added in digital intelligence will grow over time as the new technology evolves. Azubuike and Azubuike (2016) rightly maintain that new Information and Communication Technologies such as the Internet, online gaming worlds, artificial

intelligence, robotics and 3D printing are evolving and require adequate training of librarians. Without adequate training in using these digital resources and services, academic librarians will be left behind in the digital age.

Statement of the Problem

The inability of academic libraries to use digital resources to deliver effective information services is still a challenge (Lamptey, 2016).The central argument in various studies indicated that poor usage of digital resources occasioned by prohibitive costs of ICTs equipment, accessories, operations and services in developing countries is still persistent among academic librarians. Clearly poor Internet development in Africa and poor digital literacy of librarians resulting from inadequate training has hindered the effective use of digital resources in academic libraries. In Nigeria, constant poor power outage has frustrated effective provision of information services in university libraries. Many libraries rely on the use of alternative sources of electricity supply to power their computer networks. Added to all these is the endermic problem of poor funding which affect the acquisition of information and communication technology equipment, Internet subscriptions, staff training, emolument and maintenance. In view of all these, this study sought to explore the usage of digital resources by academic librarians in university libraries for effective service delivery in Gombe State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The mainl objective of this study was to investigate the usage of digital resources by academic librarians in university libraries for effective service delivery in Gombe State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought:

1. To determine the extent of usage of digital resources by academic librarians in university libraries in Gombe State.

2. To examine various challenges in the usage of digital resources in university libraries in Gombe

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive research design. This methodology was adopted because the study focused on the usage of digital resources by academic librarians in university libraries for effective service delivery in Gombe State, Nigeria. Presently, there are three universities in Gombe State which include: Gombe State University, Federal University, Kashere and Gombe State University of Science and Technology, Kumo Also, there are 45 practicing Librarians in these universities. No sampling was conducted as the population size was manageable. Questionnaire was the main instrument used for data collection for this study. The questionnaire was structured on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) =3, Disagree (D)=2 and, Strongly Disagree (SD)= 1 respectively. A cut off mean of 2.5 was used to determine positive or negative rating. Permission of the school authorities was sought before the instrument administered. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaire to the respondents. Forty-five (45) copies of the questionnaire were distributed to the participants. However, only thirty-five (35) copies properly filled were returned and analyzed. The administration of the instrument covered a span of two weeks.

Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency distribution, percentage, mean and standard deviation.

Results

This section is concerned with data presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion of findings. The results were presented and analyzed based on the research questions that guided the study.

Research Objective 1: To determine the extent of usage of digital resources by academic librarians

Table 1: Usage of digital resources by academic librarians

S/N	Usage of digital resources	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mean
		Count%	Count%	Count%	Count%	
1	The use of various digital resources has enabled academic librarians to provide current and up-to-date information services	14 40.0%	11 31.4%	6 17.1%	4 11.4%	2.55
2	Frequent use of digital resources in academic libraries, sharing information has become an interactive process for academic librarians	17 (48.5%)	9 (25.7%)	5 (14.2%)	4 (11.4%)	2.99
3	The use of digital resources has made users to become technology friendly	15 (42.8%)	10 (28.5%)	5 (14.2%)	5 (14.2%)	2.64
4	The use of digital resources encourage learning and research activities	16 (45.7%)	8 (22.8%)	7 (20.0%)	4 (11.4%)	2.92
5	The use of digital resources in the library is an effective way of increasing access and use of library materials	18 (51.4%)	11 (31.4%)	5 (14.2%)	3 (8.5%)	2.31

Analysis in Table 1 shows that out of the five items listed, respondents agreed that four of them (Items 1-4) were used by academic librarians to enhance library services in universities in Gombe State. They were all positively rated with mean scores of 2.55 and above. Whereas Item 5 received a negative mean score of 2.31, an indication that the use of digital resources in the library is not an effective way of increasing access and use of library materials.

Research Objective 2: To examine various challenges to the usage of digital resources in academic libraries in Gombe State.

Table 2: Challenges on the usage of digital resources

S/N	Challenges on the usage of digital resources	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Mean
		Count%	Count%	Count%	Count%	
6	Lack of digital resources competency affects effective service delivery of digital resources	7 (20.0%)	4 (11.4%)	16 (45.7%)	8 (22.8%)	2.74
7	Poor knowledge of the usage of digital resources	5 (14.2%)	3 (8.5%)	18 (51.4%)	11 (31.4%)	2.79
8	Poor Internet access affects effective service delivery	6 (17.1%)	4 (11.4%)	14 (40.0%)	11 (31.4%)	2.60
9	Poor funding affects the provision of digital resources in the library	3 (22.7%)	4 (17.2%)	16 (30.1%)	12 (29.8%)	2.84
10	Poor digital technology awareness affects academic librarians' low use of digital resources	5 (14.2%)	4 (11.4%)	17 (48.5%)	9 (25.7%)	2.66

Analysis in Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed that lack of digital skills, poor digital knowledge, awareness, poor Internet access as well as poor funding were challenges affecting the use

of digital resources by academic librarians in these university libraries. They all received positive mean scores of 2.66 and above.

Conclusion

This study investigated the usage of digital resources by academic librarians in university libraries in Gombe State, Nigeria. Findings revealed that the use of digital resources made users to become more technology friendly. The study concludes that the use of digital resources encourages learning and research activities. Thus, there is an obvious need to improve on the knowledge of Internet services and digital technology awareness for effective digital resources competent among the librarians.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Library management should strategize to deploy the use of digital resources by academic librarians in university libraries in Gombe State
2. Library management should organize regular trainings, workshops and seminars to sustain the use of digital resources in university libraries in Gombe State.
3. The need for improved fund for the acquisition and maintenance of digital resources in university libraries in Gombe State cannot be over emphasized.

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