

Internet Utilization Pattern among Librarians: A Case Study of Federal Polytechnic–Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State Nigeria

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Abstract

This paper focuses on internet utilization pattern among librarians at Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. The objective of the research is to determine the reasons why librarians use the Internet, and the effect it has on their service delivery. A well-structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from respondents in the course of the research; data analysis method used was simple descriptive statistics. It was found out in the research that librarians at Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti used the Internet for numerous purposes. This work also reflects on numerous challenges being encountered by librarians especially network failures, poor band width, etc., while using the Internet at the Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti. The researchers however discovered that there were positive impacts of Internet use as it has increased the librarians' productivity level. It was therefore recommended that heads of libraries should emphasize the need strong band width and constant access to the Internet in the library and Polytechnic Librarians should let their parent institutions see the need for functional Internet services in their libraries.

Keywords: Internet, Utilization, Librarians, Polytechnic, Digital, Library.

Introduction

The Federal Polytechnic Digital Library is presently located in a building about 200 meters away from the central Administration Building, but situated closely to male hostel popularly called Abuja Hostel. The Library was established simultaneously with the academic departments in January 1978. It is the academic nerve centre of the polytechnic with the primary objective of supporting teaching, learning and research activities. It currently has over 20,000 volumes of books and subscribes to about 300 journal titles. The Polytechnic Digital Library has seating capacity for over 1,000 readers at a time.

The library is organized into the following departments:

- i. The Polytechnic Librarian's Office (Administration)
- ii. The Technical Services Department/Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Unit.
- iii. Readers Services Department/Serials Department

Traditionally librarians have been information providers for centuries. They now have the opportunity to use modern tools to provide quicker, more complex, and more sophisticated services to their patrons. Databases and reference sources can be queried via the Internet and World Wide Web. Remote library catalogs are available on desktops; new groups and mailing lists provide a wonderful opportunity to discuss mutual concerns quickly and electronic mail allows librarians to find out and contact those who might be able to help provide answers to information enquiries. Perhaps no innovation has impacted the library profession to such a great extent as the Internet, World Wide Web and networked resources. The interconnections of world through the use of Internet and Web have changed the fundamental roles, paradigms and culture of libraries and librarians in this digital age. Gatenby (2003) states that the greatest phenomenon of recent years has been the explosion of the Internet.

As digital technology gained greater status in teaching and learning activities, the needs, expectations, and relationships of all stakeholders (faculties, students, librarians, and administrators) have changed significantly. Avet (2006) discusses the use of Internet search engines as reference tools for librarians and claims that the contribution of library and information professionals to reference work has increased rather than reverse as electronic information sources have proliferated

Salaam (2003), in a survey of the use of Internet services in Nigerian university libraries, found that access to Internet services in the libraries surveyed was restricted to staff only. The survey further identified poor telecommunication system, unreliable electricity supply, lack of network in some parts of the country, and poor funding of university system as major problems militating against access and use of Internet facilities. The Internet is arguably one of the most significant technological developments of the late 20th century.

Its appearance in higher education was being used as a tool for researchers to communicate and share projects data. Today the .edu domain is still one of the largest contributors to the Internet. However, the Internet

is unorganized and Web sites appear, disappear, move or mutate on daily basis. While the Internet is difficult to search, it is even more difficult to search it well. Moreover, the information found on the Internet has both useful and useless or irrelevant posting on the net, confirming the popular saying; garbage in garbage out .coexisting(New Mexico State University Library,4 2002).

Brabazon⁵ (2001) also asserted that, "over the years, I've learned far more online about how things really work than I learned about how things should work in theory in six years of higher education as an undergraduate and graduate student." Cyberspace becomes the virtual library and university and the fountain of all knowledge. The Internet can be conceived as a rich, multi-layered, complex, ever-changing textual environment. The Internet provides several opportunities for the academia. It is a mechanism for information dissemination and a medium for collaborative interaction between individuals and their computers without regard for geographical limitation of space (Leiner⁶ et al., 2000; Singh, 2002). Content created on the Internet ranges from simple e-mail messages to sophisticated 'documents' (sites) incorporating sounds, images and words.

According to Evans⁷ (1996), The Internet is a 'live', constantly 'moving', theoretically borderless, potentially infinite space for the production and circulation of information. The Internet is arguably one of the most significant technological developments of the late 20th century.

Peters and Lankshear⁸(1996) asserted that while printed materials have a certain fixity and finitude, texts published via the Internet have a much more fluid character. With texts no longer housed between library or bookshop walls, it becomes impossible to 'pin down' all or even most of the available materials in given subject areas for archival and classification purposes. The Internet might thus be described as a 'sea of information', subject to the ebb and flow of various forces (political, corporate, institutional, etc.), creating an ever-shifting shoreline.

It is one thing for the internet to be regarded as very vital to human existence, and yet another to ask if people (especially librarians) make optimal use of this technology especially in this age of globalization. This paper therefore seeks to investigate the Internet use pattern by librarians in Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

- To ascertain the reasons why librarians use internet at Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti.
- To determine if internet use enhance the service delivery of librarians of Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti.
- To examine the problems encountered while using the internet by librarians in the library studied and proffer solutions to them.

Research questions

- What are the reasons why librarians use internet at Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti?
- Does internet use enhance service delivery of librarians of Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti?
- What are the problems encountered by librarians while using the internet in the library studied and what solutions could be proffered to them?

Literature review

Librarianship is one of the oldest professions in the world and the time calls for a new breed of librarians, those who understand and integrate technology, information and learning into a new model (Drake,⁹ 1996).

Since the 1800s, the field of librarianship has seen the technology grow from handwriting to electronic pen, to typewriter, to word processor, and now to computer. Electronic resources and the Internet now help to make the task of obtaining reference materials more accessible and much faster than ever before. Already computer databases have rendered the bulky card catalogs obsolete and new media have broadened the range of materials available for browsing (Percovitz,¹⁰ 1995).

The growth of unstructured data on Internet and WorldWide Web has created significant problems related to the efficiency and accuracy of information retrieval. In addition, information repositories on Internet are heterogeneous, inconsistent and sometimes incomplete (Bowman¹¹ et.al, 1994).

To make effective use of this wealth of information, a number of resource discovery tools have been created. In Internet browsing, the user follows the hypertext links to locate the information.

When the size of the Web increased beyond few sites and a small number of documents, it becomes clear that manual browsing through a significant portion of the hypertext structure is no longer possible (Koster,¹² 1995).

The technology change has been affecting various type of libraries including public, school, academic and special libraries. There is indeed a paradigm shift in the traditional concept, as well as in the operations and services of libraries. The training and education at library and information science institutions have improved, such that librarians and information scientists being produced today are being trained such that they would be able to apply the skills of ICT to their professional practice. The information sources in libraries are no longer

limited to books and journals but also CD-ROMs, audio and video resources. Libraries now subscribe to electronic versions of information sources such as e-books, e-journals and e-maps. Publishing and distribution of books and journals are being done electronically with ease through internet and the possibility of having access to information held by libraries all over the world (Aina,13 2004).

Jones14 (2002), in a research carried out on the Internet and American life, found that college students use the Internet more to communicate socially than they do for academic work.

Nwokedi15 (2007) posits that lack of searching skills is still hindering good use of Internet. He further asserts that acquisition of Internet skills can lead to discovery of valuable research and teaching resources, which could in turn cause the users to use the Internet to enhance their research and learning capabilities. Internet accessibility would stimulate regular use of Internet and minimize the perceived barriers to its use.

Methodology

A descriptive survey design was adopted in this study. The study population comprised of academic librarians of The Federal Polytechnic. Ado- Ekiti. A total of 15 librarians were selected. The desk officers were trained in administering a self-developed questionnaire on them. While administering the questionnaire, respondents were asked if they had earlier filled the instrument so as to forestall duplication. With close proximity and effective follow up, 15 respondents returned their questionnaire, thereby giving a response rate of 100 percent. Data analysis was simple descriptive statistics.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Data analysis and discussion of findings

What are the reasons why librarians use internet at federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti

Table1

	Item	A	%	SA	%	D	%	SD	%
1	I use the internet to ask salient questions	10	66.6%	05	33.3%	00	0%	00	0%
2	I use the internet to download library software	08	53.3%	04	26.6%	01	6.6%	00	0%
3	I use the internet to access pornographic sites	00	0%	00	0%	13	86.6%	02	13.3%
4	I use the internet to gamble electronically	00	0%	00	0%	06	40%	09	60%
5	I use the internet to access news magazines electronically	10	66.6%	05	33.3%	00	0%	00	0%
6	I use the internet to buy and sell electronically	07	46.6%	06	40%	01	6.6%	01	6.6%
7	I use the internet to participate in professional conference electronically	12	80%	02	13.3%	00	0%	01	6.6%
8	I use the internet to participate in professional conference electronically	08	53.3%	06	40%	01	6.6%	00	0%
9	I use the internet to access sporting news	05	33.3%	06	60%	01	6.6%	00	0%
10	I use the internet to access OPAC	07	46.6%	03	20%	1	6.6%	04	26.6%
11	I use the internet to search for jobs opportunities	08	53.3%	04	26.6%	01	6.6%	01	6.6%
12	I use the internet to access online newspapers	04	26.6%	06	40%	03	20%	01	6.6%
13	I use the internet to chat with friends and colleagues	05	33.3%	07	46.6%	02	13.3%	01	6.6%
14	I use the search engines through the internet to access information	06	40%	04	26%	03	20%	02	13.3%

Analysis of the study from table (1) above showed that respondents made good use of the Internet for various purposes such as: using the internet to ask salient questionagree and strongly agree attracted(99%)disagree and strongly disagree (1%); downloading of software agree and strongly agree (79%),disagree and strongly disagree (6.6%); for online gambling agree and strongly agree (6%),disagree and strongly disagree(96%);for buying and selling online agree and strongly agree(48%) disagree and strongly disagree(20%);to read magazine online agree and strongly agree (80%)disagree and strongly disagree (52),to chat with friends agree and strongly agree(78),disagree and strongly disagree(12%) to search for job opportunities agree and strongly agree (89%),disagree and strongly disagree (11%), to access OPAC agree and strongly agree (86%),disagree and strongly disagree(66%) to access information agree and strongly agree(60%) disagree and strongly disagree(18%) to access pornographic sites agree and strongly agree (1%) disagree and strongly disagree(99%)e for sporting news agree and strongly agree (86%) disagree and strongly disagree(20%) to participate in online conference agree and strongly agree (66%) disagree and strongly disagree(33%)etc

Does the internet use contribute to service delivery of librarians at Federal Polytechnic Ado-Ekiti?

Table 11

	Item	A	%	SA	%	D	%	SD	%
15	Internet use has increased my productivity at work	6	40%	5	33.3%	3	20%	1	6%
16	Internet use has improved my online search skill	10	66.6%	05	33.3%	00	0%	00	0%
17	Internet use has significantly enhanced my core competence in the field of librarianship	08	53.3%	04	26.6%	01	6.6%	00	0%
18	Internet has exposed me more to the world of scholarship	10	66.6%	05	33.3%	00	0%	00	0%
19	Internet use has contributed to ease of research process for me	08	53.3%	06	40%	01	6.6%	00	0%
20	Internet use has exposed me to global events	07	46.6%	06	40%	01	6.6%	01	6.6%

From table (11) above, respondents indicated that librarian' productivities in the library studied was greatly enhanced as thus:Internet use has increased my productivity at work,agree and strongly agree (99%), disagree and strongly disagree (1%)Internet use has improved my online search skill,agree and strongly agree (79%), disagree and strongly disagree (6.6%)Internet use has significantly enhanced my core competence in the field of librarianship,agree and strongly agree (99%), disagree and strongly disagree (1%)Internet use has improved my online search skill, agree and strongly agree (93%), disagree and strongly disagree (6.6%)Internet has exposed me more to the world of scholarship, agree and strongly agree (86.6%), disagree and strongly disagree (6.6%)Internet use has contributed to ease of research process for me, agree and strongly agree (99%), disagree and strongly disagree (1%)Internet use has exposed me to global events, agree and strongly agree (93%) disagree and strongly disagree (00%) etc

What are the problems librarians encounter while using the internet at Federal Polytechnic ado-ekiti Library?

Table 111

	Item	A	%	SA	%	D	%	SD	%
21	Poor electricity supply has hindered my internet use	10	66.6%	05	33.3%	00	0%	00	0%
22	High import duties prevent librarians from acquiring state of the art ICT equipment	12	80%	02	13.3%	00	0%	01	6.6%
23	Frequent changes in technology reduces librarians acquaintance with internet tools and techniques	00	0%	00	0%	06	40%	09	60%
24	Network failure disturbs my internet use	08	53.3%	06	40%	01	6.6%	00	0%

From table (111) above, respondents indicated numerous factors inhibiting them from utilizing the internet as thus:Poor electricity supply has hindered my internet use, agree and strongly agree (99%), disagree and strongly disagree (6.6%) , High import duties prevent librarians from acquiring state of the art ICT equipment,agree and strongly agree(01%) ,disagree and strongly disagree (100%),Frequent changes in technology reduces librarians acquaintance with internet tools and techniques,agree and strongly agree(00%), disagree and strongly disagree(100%)Network failure disturbs my internet use,agree and strongly agree(93.3%),disagree and strongly disagree (6.6%).

FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

It was found out from the research that:

Librarians under the library studied used the internet for numerous purposes such as using the internet to ask salient questions, downloading of library software, sending and receiving of electronic mails, search for jobs, access electronic journals, chat with friends. This is in tandem with the submission of Hathorn16 (1997)that , the rise ofdigitized information is an opportunity to elevate the role oflibrarians and leads to the emergence of a new breed of librarians:"The Cyber Librarian" or "Cybrarian" - a specialist in locatinginformation on the Internet (Hathorn16, 1997). At the extremeof the spectrum, on the other hand, total obsolescenceand eclipse of library professionals in a scenario whereknowledge base is diversified and wide and developments in the fields like Artificial Intelligence, Neural Networks resultin powerful, cost effective, user-friendly search strategiesand methods (Brodie,17 1995).

The researchers also found out that librarians under the library studied showed positive and tremendous impact of internet use as opportunity to boost their productivity because this was revealed in the analysis of the work that internet has greatly influenced their (librarians) work performance.

Lastly, it was revealed in the research that combinations of factors still prevent librariansfrom using the

internet to the maximum. Some of such factors among others include poor electricity supply; low Internet access due to poor band width; high import duties; frequent changes in technology; network failures etc.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Globally today, the use of Internet facilities for communication and sharing of knowledge can never be overemphasized. In Africa, the use of Internet has come to stay as it has gained a wider acceptance in nearly all spheres of life. More importantly, in an academic environment where students need to search for more information outside their own institution, in order to enhance their academic performance. Internet services have become a do without.

The role of librarians is continuing to evolve with the adoption of Internet and World Wide Web into the profession of librarianship. Though it may be difficult to predict with certainty how active the role of librarians would be in this evolving scenario, it can be said with confidence that their services cannot be dispensed with because they have the necessary qualifications and historically they are the first to attend to the information needs of information seekers. The following were recommended based on the outcome of the research:

- The Internet facilities located inside the campus should be made more functional to encourage Internet use by librarians as bulk of information processing tasks start and end on their tables.
- Heads of libraries should emphasize the importance of internet facilities in their libraries and lobby to drive their parent institutions' financiers to see the need for internet in their libraries.
- Memos should be written, circulated, treated and delivered via the internet in the library and also on the campus through the use of text messages, e-mails, blogs, etc.
- There should be alternate power supply such as generating plant, in order to have a steady supply of electricity needed for effective Internet services.
- School management should collaborate with computer suppliers to make available note-books, smart phones, ipads, androids, lap-top computers to librarians at cheaper prices. This will serve as motivator to them and become more exposed to the applicability of internet in order to serve their clients better.

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