Internet VS Library: Coping Strategies for Academic Librarians in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract
The potential impact of the Internet on the members of academic communities demand for the services and resources of academic libraries is an issue of critical importance. The research reported in this article provides baseline data concerning the perception of librarians about the internet. The results showed, among other things, that the internet is a competitor with librarians. Suggestions are made on how librarians can take advantage of the shortcomings of the internet to continue to be relevant in information processing and dissemination in Nigerian academic libraries.
Keywords: Internet, Academic library, Librarians, Competitive Intelligence.

1. Introduction

The rapid pace of change in the last two decades is no longer news; it's just our 21st century way of life made possible by information and telecommunication technology. Whether patrons or library staff, we are faced almost daily with the need to acquire new knowledge.

A common question in recent time has been "What are the roles of academic library in this era of Internet?" Indeed, even library administrators, managers and other personnel may share this thought privately and among themselves. This question reflects the assessment that the libraries of today and the future may very well be facing a critical competitive force in the internet.

Internet has become a huge information centre that helps in meeting the information requirements of the visitors. In fact, the Internet is being viewed increasingly as a versatile system, providing an enormous variety of materials in different formats. The presence of the Internet is so strong that many students and lecturers in Nigerian academic institutions see it as an alternative to an academic library. The convenience of Internet-based research takes a toll on traditional library-based resources, making these long-established tools underutilized by student researchers. The budgets for materials acquisition seem to get tighter every year, making it harder to expand collections while, at the same time, the slackening use of these resources under-cuts arguments for their continued expense.

The Internet is like a Pandora's Box, where anyone can put information at any point in time. The amount of information available on the Internet means that user tend to be side-tracked with a lot of unnecessary useless information. As the Internet is not owned by anyone, there are no checks or censorship of information available.(Osunade, 2003).

Customer service is a core value for libraries. It is embedded in the nature of a public institution that strives to serve the needs of its community. Traditionally librarian is known as a person located in the library building carrying out the tasks like acquiring, organizing, preserving the printed documents besides helping the readers in locating the information needed by them. In the last decades of the twentieth century this picture has rapidly changed under the influence of advances in computer and communication technology. The paper collections have given place to networked, computer resident, user searchable collections like bibliographic databases, Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC) obliterating the need for the user to visit the library building. Technological and social changes are driving an evolution of the way libraries meet those needs of its community. Many people who work in libraries are taking a fresh look at what customer service means in today's networked and consumer-oriented world.

The Internet is fast gaining the confidence of scholars and researchers as a veritable source of information. The response of academic librarians in Nigeria is to rise above the challenges they face to take advantage of the shortcomings of the Internet and adopt new methods of providing service to their patrons. This is to make sure they remain relevant in their fast changing and competitive environment.

According to Mason and Dobson (1998), competitive intelligence is the process of interacting with wide range of data sources, creatively finding and using alternative information sources and then gathering and sifting the data, so that it can reveal a more understandable and possibly predictive pattern. This is with the aim of gaining competitive advantage over competitors.

An attempt has been made to review the Internet as an information source and study the perception of academic librarians about the impact of Internet on provision of information library services in academic institutions in

Nigeria with academic institutions in Lagos State as case study .

2. Review of Literature
2.1 Internet: A Vast Electronic Library
The Internet is an umbrella under which different networks, small and big, freely exchange information across the globe. Internet, thus, can broadly be defined as worldwide network of computers communicating via an agreed upon protocol (rules for exchange of information) (D'Elia et al, 2007). It provides access to the most diversified source of information hosted by individuals and various organisation worlds wide on a vast network of servers.

The Internet and its associated technologies have the essential features of a massive library system, where people can roam through the electronic equivalent of book stacks, with assistance from the electronic equivalent of reference librarians. In short, one major reason why characteristics of the Internet are so compatible with those of universities is that some of the Internet's most significant capabilities resemble, and dovetail with, the capabilities of university research libraries. Just as the research library is an extremely powerful instrument for learning, so too is the Internet ... " Internet is considered as a great information source to the academic and research community and also a great information tool to the library and information centres to supplement their information support to the user community.

The internet therefore, is a vast electronic library made up of millions of pages of information stored in hundreds of thousands of linked computers across the globe. The Web has brought to the desk top, not only metadata sources like bibliographic databases and table of contents, but also full text of journals, preprints, technical reports, patents, courseware and textbooks.

2.2 Challenges of a Nigerian Librarian
A librarian is a professional who acquires, organize, process, store and disseminate information in whatever format. Academic librarian as contained in this study mean librarians of higher institutions such as colleges of education, polytechnics and universities. Customer service is a core value for libraries. It is embedded in the nature of a public institution that strives to serve the needs of its community. Technological and social changes are driving an evolution of the way libraries meet those needs. Many librarians are taking a fresh look at what customer service means in today's networked and consumer-oriented world. With more and more documents getting published electronically and Internet resources growing at a rapid rate, librarians who want to be relevant in this 21st century will have to shift towards electronic means of acquiring, processing and disseminating information. Most librarians in Nigeria have the following challenges to contend with in a bid to be relevant in this digital age.

1. Training background: - The curricula of most library schools in Nigeria have not responded positively to changes brought to the environment by the infusion of information and communication technology (Aina, 2007). On the job trainings for librarians to improve their competency in the area of information and communication technology are inadequate. Many librarians are therefore deficient in the area of application of information and communication technology to their job.
2. Work environment: - The environment where most librarians work is not conducive for optimal performance. Lack of facilities such as office furniture, stationeries and information and communication technology facilities are part of the challenges faced by academic librarians in Nigeria.
3. Electricity: - The erratic nature of electric power supply in Nigeria is another problem that confronts academic librarians.

2.3 Competitive Intelligence via Environmental Scanning
Competitive Intelligence is a process of pulling data and information together to forecast what is going to happen with a view to strategizing in relation to a competitive environment. This process requires that we go from data to information to intelligence.

Great competitive intelligence will challenge librarians to think in new ways. There are too many changes taking place in the world of information processing and communication today. There is no way librarians should be comfortable with the status quo. Therefore, competitive intelligence should deliberately test and validate critical decisions such as investment in library resources or design of curriculum for information literacy for library patrons. Likewise, librarians should welcome and encourage competitive intelligence to challenge both tactical and strategic decision-making. Competitive intelligence should be a reality check. Figure 1

Through environmental scanning of direct and indirect forces, a baseline understanding of the critical concerns that competitive intelligence must address is established. We can now move forward with our competitive intelligence effort. Environmental scanning is defined as a management process adopted by organizations to deal with external environmental information, the products of which would assist tactical and strategic decision making. (Zhang, Majid and Foo, 2010) It starts from scanning needs identification and ends at information evaluation and use. The collected environmental information is filtered, interpreted and organized to formulate

insights or predictions about the external environments, and then disseminated to its end users for evaluation and use. Environmental scanning is a typical application of information literacy skills in the workplace, as each of its activities could only be completed effectively and efficiently with people possessing the corresponding information literacy skills.

3.Purpose of the Study
The purpose of this study is to investigate the perception of academic librarians in Nigeria about the internet as a competitor. This is with a view to suggesting how they can take advantage of the internet to make sure that library services continue to remain relevant in their academic institutions.

4.Scope of the Study
This study covered public academic libraries in Lagos State. The only public library that was not covered, Michael Otedola college of Primary Education (MACOPED) is at Epe, a town outside Lagos metropolies.

5.Objectives of the Study
1. To understand the perceptions of Internet technology by library professionals;
2. To identify the purpose of using Internet by librarians;
3. To explore the use of Internet services and its impact on library activities and services;
4. To identify ways by which librarians are taking advantage of Internet for efficient customer services.
5. To explore how librarians are putting their core competences to use in sustaining the relevance of librarianship.

6.Research Questions
This study is to answer the following research questions:
1. How competent are Nigerian academic librarians in the use of software packages?
2. What is the impact of Internet use on library activities and services?
3. Do librarians see the Internet as a competitor?

7.Research Hypotheses
The study is to test the following null hypotheses:
1. There is no significant difference between library practices before and after the advent of the Internet.
2. Internet is not beneficial as source of information than library collections.

8.Methodology
The population used for this study consists of librarians in six (6) public academic institutions in Lagos State, Nigeria. These institutions are University of Lagos (UNILAG), Lagos State University (LASU), Lagos State Polytechnic (LASPOTECH), Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH), Federal College of Education Technical Akoka (FCET) and Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education (ACOED). The data collection instruments for this study are questionnaires developed by the researcher. The questionnaires were administered to every librarian, who is not on leave, in each of the six institutions. The period of administration of the questionnaires spanned one week to make sure there is high response rate to their completion. Data collected from the study through the use of the questionnaires was subjected to analysis using Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS). Observations were made by the researcher to know availability of information and communication technology facilities in each library.

9. Data Analysis and Interpretation
9.1 ICT resources in the Libraries
From the observations that were carried out in each of the libraries, many of the libraries have enough computers (Table 2). However, only two of the libraries UNILAG and YABATECH have library websites. Although four of the libraries UNILAG, LASU, YABATECH and FCET have electronic libraries, only LASU electronic library could be described as a functional electronic library.
9.2 Use of Microsoft Office packages
Microsoft Office is computer software that consists of Microsoft Word - a word processor, Microsoft Excel – a spreadsheet, Microsoft Access – a database package, Microsoft PowerPoint – a presentation package and some other packages. These four packages are the commonest computer software used for office processes. Respondents were asked to indicate how many of these four packages they can use. The result showed that only 15.4% (Table 3) of the total respondents can use all the four packages. This result shows a low competency level in the use of computer software by academic librarians in Nigeria.

9.3 Impact of Internet on Library Activities and Services

Internet services and tools are not only supporting the in-house activities of library in building strong information base but also help to meet the academic and research needs of user community. Respondents were asked if the internet has made their work easier. Table 3 shows the use of Internet in library activities and services. The results indicate that, librarians make use of Internet mainly for e-mail services (100%) and online catalogue (61.5%) for organization and retrieval activity of libraries. E-journal subscription (28.8%) is used in acquisition and serials control activities of library. It further indicates that, Internet is used by libraries for ordering books (9.6%) and information resource sharing (11.5%).

9.4 Internet as Competitor

There is a Chinese saying:

Know thy-self, know thy competition, and get it right almost every time.

Know thy-self, not know thy competition, and get it right about half the time.

Not know thy-self, not know thy competition, and get it wrong almost every time.(Evans, 2011)

It is important for librarians not only to know themselves but also know factors that influence librarianship. 62.8% of respondents agreed that the internet is competing with their jobs as librarians. Although this shows that majority are aware of the dangers of not paying attention to internet technology, many (37.2%) are ignorant of the potentials of internet as a competitor. Table 5

10. Test of Hypotheses

1. One sample t-test was used to test the null hypothesis that says there is no significant difference between library practices before and after the advent of the Internet. Table 6

z calculated 2.2644 at 5% level of significance is greater than z table 1.96, so the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is significant difference between library practices before and after the advent of the Internet. With the Internet, libraries are able to provide remote access for their users not only to their local collections and catalog, but also to library collections around the nation and the world. The Internet has also change acquisition of library materials and brought about new ways of registration of library users.

2. One sample t-test was also used to test the null hypothesis which says internet is not beneficial as source of information than library collections. Table 7

Z calculated 1.6129 at 5% level of significance is less than z table 1.96, so we accept the null hypothesis which says internet is not beneficial as source of information than library collections. This result supports the fact that the internet is a huge reservoir of unstructured information in which an information seeker may waste a lot of time searching for useful information.

11. Conclusion and Recommendations

The results of this study showed that academic librarians in Nigeria have a competitor in internet. Librarians acting as custodians of information have gone through a dramatic change and from providing document to their clienteles have switched to be information providers. The role of librarian as information organiser and a navigator has gained importance in the lnternet era. The first line of response for an academic librarian in Nigeria is to improve his/her competency level in the area of use of information and communication technology facilities. Library administrators need to include staff training and practice time in any budget for Internet connectivity The library professionals need to focus and seize new opportunities and demonstrate how the tools of lnternet can be gainfully harnessed for improving library services.

lnternet can be viewed as the biggest library in the world in which information is not properly structured and organised, there are no standardised rules of classification or access. There is issue of the volatile nature of sites, lack of information on these sites will come in the way of accessing the Internet. Taking into account the current and foreseeable increase in the number of documents or the web sites on the Internet, these issues will become the crucial problems in access to information. It is therefore, important to seek a definition of catalogue, indexes and thesauri and help of librarians which would provide homogenous access to information and data.

lnternet has many other drawbacks like lack of comprehensiveness, coverage, the inability to distinguish between popular material and research work, lack of controlled vocabulary and also a casual approach of the web page designer often makes the web databases more difficult to search. Librarians can play a greater role in identification, listing, and classifying information sources and providing systematic approach to accessing the required information. This way they can take rightful place as human agent alongside the search engine in searching the Internet.

In the due course of time librarians will have to develop new indexing methods and evaluation techniques to tap information from the lnternet and also establish the classification modes in an open way to allow for that addition of new categories of document that may differ from original priorities. By doing this, librarians will be adding the gateway model of digital library to the resource-based model of learning common to most academic

libraries in Nigeria. Hence, the uncertainties raised by some people that lnternet may be a threat to library and library science profession is no longer true.

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Table 1: Distribution of respondents

Institution	Total number of librarians	No of Questionnaires Administered	No of Questionnaires Filled and Returned	Response rate
UNILAG	20	17	13	76.5%
LASU	17	13	10	76.9%
LASPOTECH	08	07	06	85.7%
YABATECH	17	12	11	91.6%
FCET	10	08	06	75.0%
ACOED	08	07	06	85.7%
TOTAL	80	64	52	81.3%

Table 2: ICT resources in the libraries

Institution	Number of computers	Library Software	Library Website	E-library Services
UNILAG	97	Millenium	Available	Available
LASU	180	Alice for Windows	Not Available	Available
		Lib plus		
LASPOTECH	120	X-lib	Not Available	Not Available
YABATECH	60	■	Available	Available
FCET	22	■	Not Available	Available
ACOED	30		Not Available	Not Available

Table 3. Competency in Microsoft Office

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	One Package	20	38.4	38.4	38.4
	Two Packages	16	30.8	30.8	69.2
	Three Packages	8	15.4	15.4	84.6
	Four Packages	8	15.4	15.4	100.0
	Total	52	100.0	100.0	

Table 4: Internet use in Library Activities and Services

		Total no. of respondent	Frequency	Percent
Valid	Ordering Books	52	5	9.6
	E-journal Subscription	52	15	28.8
	Online Catalogue	52	32	61.5
	E-mail	52	52	100.0
	Resource Sharing	52	6	11.5

Table 5: Internet as Competitor

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	10	19.2	19.6	19.6
	Agree	22	42.3	43.2	62.8
	Disagree	12	23.0	23.5	86.3
	Strongly Disagree	7	13.5	13.7	100.0
	Total	51	98.0	100.0	
Missing	System	1	2.0		
Total		52	100.0		

Table 6: Hypothesis 1

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Simplified work	17.765	52	.000	2.03125	1.7981	2.2644

Table 7: Hypothesis 2

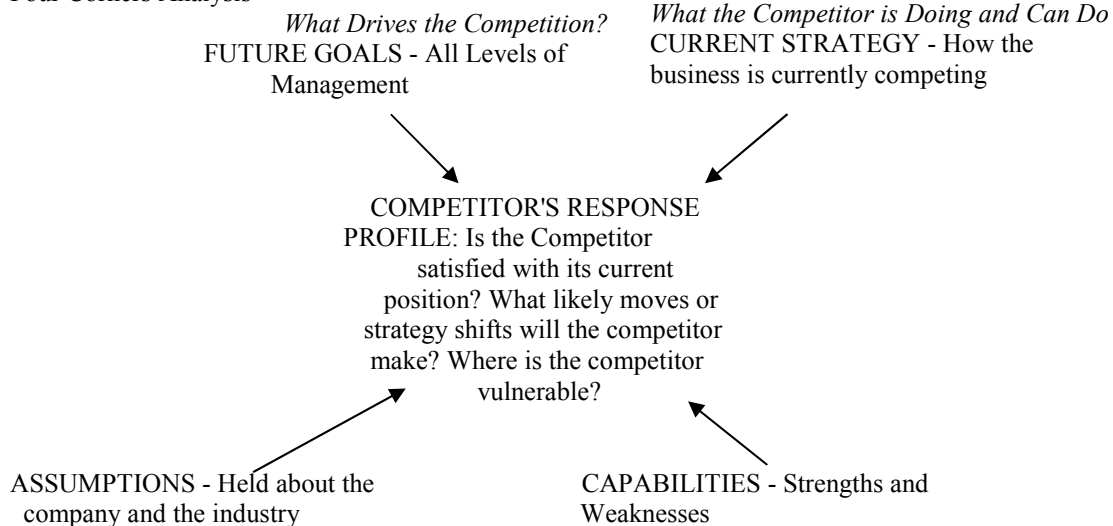|	Test Value = 1					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper	Lower	Upper
Benefit Users	11.787	51	.000	1.37500	1.1371	1.6129

Four Corners Analysis

Fig. 1. Source: Competitive Strategy: Techniques for Analyzing Industries and Competitors by Michael E. Porter
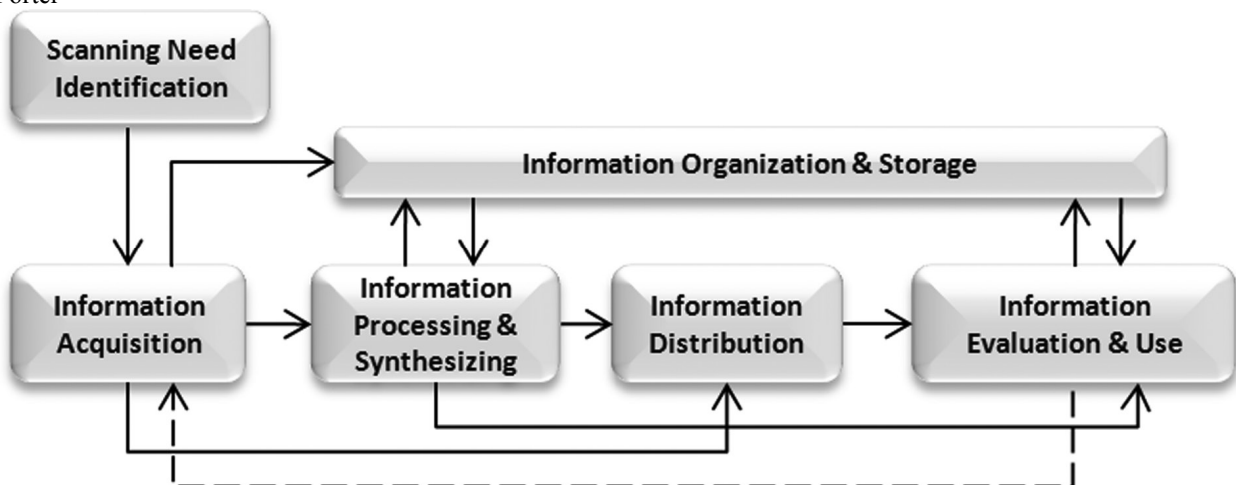

Fig. 2. Environmental scanning process. Source: Environmental scanning: An application of information literacy skills at the workplace by Xue Zhang, Shaheen Majid and Schubert Foo