

Assessing the Contents of Nigeria Academic Library Website

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Abstract

This study is to assess the content of academic library websites in Nigeria with a view to identify the extent to which they effectively facilitate access to electronic resources, provide online library services, provide its patrons with contact and general information on the services they provide their patrons. The population of this study is 40 Federal University libraries in Nigeria. The sample size is made of 37 Federal University Libraries with a functional website. A check list under six broad categories was design and data was collected by visiting the library websites through their University home page in September 2013. The study revealed that even though Nigerian academic libraries have made their presence online by deploying a library website, many of them do not use their library websites to provide their patrons with contact and general information on the services they provide and facilitate access to their resources. The study concluded that the use of library website to provide general information and contact information on the library was explored only by very few academic libraries. Recommendation for the redesign of academic library websites to make it more effective was made.

Keywords: Nigerian academic library, academic website, electronic resources, access to electronic resources, open access, Internet savvy patrons

1. Introduction

The explosive growth and use of the web has made it more difficult for any individual site to be seen, or for any individual patron to make sense of it. As patrons continue to make greater use of the Internet, librarians now use web sites as a means to facilitate access to specific Internet and other digital resources. Library website supports users in their information tasks, hence It has been identified as a platform for library to recommend sites and point users to relevant and current electronic information resources. Wright (2004) asserted that a library's Web page is the most common vehicle for the delivery of instruction and information. With the availability of Internet and with the growing number of Internet savvy students, many academic library users will prefer to visit the library's virtual website more often than visit its physical location. Library website creates an information environment where the provision of information resources and service is no longer constrained by time and place. Supporting this assertion, Joo et.al.(2011) posited that a library website plays a role of an extension and augmentation of a traditional physical library, and offers a variety of library services such as electronic resource access online catalogs, and online reference services.

Deregulation of the telecommunications industry and related information technology policies by the Federal Government of Nigeria have created a generation of internet-savvy library patrons who expect the library to meet their information needs in an online environment (Gbaje, 2011). Lecturers and students of academic institutions also expect their libraries to use the library website to provide library and information services as well as facilitate access to electronic information remotely.

Sreedhar et al (2010) defined a website as a collection of Web pages containing text, images, audio and video. A Library website is designed to respond to information task. For a library website to be effective and meet the information needs visitors it must conform to certain best practices which includes;

- a. providing a single point of access to library resources
- b. allowing teaching staff to direct students to useful resources more easily
- c. promoting the resources held by the library, including subscription
- d. improving navigation of library resources
- e. improving access to scholarly and educational web based resources
- f. providing more efficient access to e-resources
- g. improving information service delivery
- h. provide library services 24/7
- i. facilitate access to library and information services remotely

2. Statement of Problem

Study has shown that there is a decline in the use of library physical collections and services which may imperil the quality of teaching, learning and research in academic institutions. Grimes and Boening (2001), posited that that many library users by pass library resources and went directly to the Web for information. Similarly Connell (2008) posited that many users visit a library's virtual website more often than they visit its physical location. It

becomes Imperative that for the library to continue to play its role in providing relevant, and accurate information to its patrons it must employ the use of the web by designing and deploying an effective library website. Poorly designed library website will not improve the visibility of the library neither will it promote what the library has to offer. Therefore, designing an effective library website that attracts as well as retains library users has become an important task for all academic libraries.

The purpose of this study is to assess the content of academic library websites in Nigeria with a view to identify the extent to which it is effective in providing the library and information needs of its patrons. In specific terms, the paper has the following objectives:

1. To determine the types of information and electronic resources facilitated by the academic libraries website
2. To determine the type of online services and web 2.0 services provided through the academic libraries website.

3.Methodology

The population of this study is 40 Nigeria Federal Universities. Three Federal Universities were excluded from the study because they were established in the year 2013 and at the time of the study they did not have a functional website. The 37 Federal University Libraries is the sample size for this study. Data was collected by visiting the library websites through the Universities Official website in the month of September, 2013.

The content analysis of the academic library website was based on Qutab and Mahmood (2009) website content analysis and modified for the purpose of the study. The modify checklist includes 33 items divided into six categories: Website aids and Navigation, Library contact Information, Library general information, Links to electronic resources, Library Online Services, and Library 2.0 services

Table 1: List of Nigerian University and Academic Libraries URL

S/N	FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES	WEBSITE ADDRESS	YEAR FOUNDED
1	Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University, Bauchi	http://www.atbu.edu.ng	1988
2	Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	http://www.abu.edu.ng	1962
3	Bayero University,Kano	http://www.buk.edu.ng	1975
4	Federal University Gashua	N/A	2013
5	Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun	http://www.fupre.edu.ng	2007
6	Federal University of Technology, Akure	http://www.futa.edu.ng	1981
7	Federal University of Technology, Minna.	http://www.futminna.edu.ng	1982
8	Federal University of Technology, Owerri	http://www.futo.edu.ng	1980
9	Federal University, Dutse, Jigawa State	http://www.fud.edu.ng/	2011
10	Federal University, Dutsin-Ma, Katsina	http://www.fudutsinma.edu.ng	2011
11	Federal University, Kashere, Gombe State	N/A	2011
12	Federal University, Lafia, Nasarawa State	http://www.fulafia.edu.ng	2011
13	Federal University, Lokoja, Kogi State	http://www.fulokoja.edu.ng	2011
14	Federal University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State	http://www.funai.edu.ng	2011
15	Federal University, Otuoke, Bayelsa	http://www.fuotuoke.edu.ng/	2011
16	Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State	http://www.fuoye.edu.ng/	2011
17	Federal University, Wukari, Taraba State	http://www.fuwukari.edu.ng/	2011
18	Federal University,Birnin Kebbi.	N/A	2013
19	Federal University,Gusau.	N/A	2013
20	Michael Okpara Uni. of Agric., Umudike	http://www.moua.org	1992
21	Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola	http://www.futy.edu.ng	1988
22	National Open University of Nigeria, Lagos.	http://www.nou.edu.ng	2002
23	Nigerian Defence Academy,Kaduna	http://www.nigeriandefenceacademy.edu.ng	1985
24	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	http://www.unizik.edu.ng	1992
25	Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife	http://www.oauife.edu.ng	1962
26	Police Academy Wudil		2012
27	University of Abuja, Gwagwalada	http://www.uniabuja.edu.ng	1988
28	University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.	http://www.unaab.edu.ng	1988
29	University of Agriculture, Makurdi.	http://www.uam.edu.ng	1988
30	University of Benin	http://www.uniben.edu.ng	1970
31	University of Calabar	http://www.unical.edu.ng	1975
32	University of Ibadan	http://www.ui.edu.ng	1948
33	University of Ilorin	http://www.unilorin.edu.ng	1975
34	University of Jos	http://www.unijos.edu.ng	1975
35	University of Lagos	http://www.unilag.edu.ng	1962
36	University of Maiduguri	http://www.unimaid.edu.ng	1975
37	University of Nigeria, Nsukka	http://www.unn.edu.ng	1960
38	University of Port-Harcourt	http://www.uniport.edu.ng	1975
39	University of Uyo	http://www.uniuyo.edu.ng	1991
40	Usumanu Danfodiyo University	http://www.udusok.edu.ng	1975

N/A: Not available

4. Review of Related Literatures

The main function of a library website is to inform library users about the library information and services. This was the concepts behind the design of the early library website as reported by Blummer (2007), who noted that the early 1990s websites were tool of communication, providing the University community with information about the collections and services available in the physical library. These types of information still remain pertinent and should be available in any effective library website. As libraries continue to make greater use of the Internet, librarians now use website as a means to provide web-based library and information services, as well as facilitate access to both print and non-print resources. Most academic institutions will have the link to the library home page very visible at the Institutions home. Bao(2000) posited that the location of a library home page link on its parent Institution's home page will determine the visibility of a library and will affect the effective use of the library online. The homepage is the most important page on most websites, and gets more page views than any other page. Library home page contains vital information which also serves as a gate way to the information resources and services the library provides its patron. It starts with Navigational tools like menus that enable users to scan menu options until they recognize what they are looking for. Navigational aids or tools define all links that can help users to make better use of the website and to find relevant information in a quick and simple manner. Providing users with good navigational tools is done by structuring contents to facilitate the journey regardless of path chosen. Supporting the good use of navigational tools Farnum (2002), also asserts that the top navigation bar can be use for global navigation and includes links to resources that users would want to access from anywhere in the site, while side bars are often used for local navigation, which show the users what topics are nearby within a division of the site.

In addition to Navigational tools an effective library website will have links to the library online catalogue where available as well as an Internal search engine. Internal search engine has been identified as another helpful navigational aid for library sites that present large amount of information, as it allows users to locate information at the sites quickly and easily. Placing a Help web page link in the upper right corner of every page will help users when they need help (Jasek 2004). The importance of search engine on a website is collaborated by Nielsen and Tahir (2002), and Wright (2004) who posited that search feature is one of the two items users seek immediately upon entering the site.

An effective library website use links to facilitate access to library's holdings, including subscribed databases, institutional based licensed databases, course reserved and open access data bases. According to Madhusudhan and Nagabhushabam (2011), the web-based reference services provided by libraries includes electronic document delivery services, electronic current awareness services, electronic Selective dissemination of information services, web-based reference tools, electronic research guides, virtual reference

By late 1990s many American Libraries moved their collections and services onto the library website (Blummer, 2007). However, in a study conducted on the "Provision of online information services by academic libraries in Nigeria" Gbaje (2007) reported that no academic library in Nigeria provided its patrons with the following web based services; online information literacy instruction, online course serve, online reference services, remote access to online catalogue, weblog and online document delivery.

In an attempt to provide additional value added service libraries have introduce web 2.0 services and facilitate access to this services through their library websites. Web 2.0 has made it possible to invite web users to share, collaborate, and contribute in the creation of information instead of the traditional one-way form of web authoring. Abram (2005) posited that Web 2.0 is the collection of server-based solutions that have allowed the web to become a publishing platform. Supporting this assertion, Liu (2008) also stated that the website is no longer just information about the library and online collection services but a virtual place that may be customizable, allow for personalization and remixability, invite user engagement and interaction, and support online communities through tools such as blogs, wikis, and tagging. Hanson and Cervone (2007) identified Wiki, blog, Really Simple Syndication (RSS), Instant Messaging (IM) and podcast as the prominent Web 2.0 tools for academic Libraries. The importance of using web 2.0 by the library was listed to include collaboration, customization, communication, knowledge generation, and sharing

5. Analysis and results

Website aids and Navigation

The study sought to identify how the selected academic library use website aids and navigation under the subheadings shown in table 2. The data collected revealed that 59% of the academic library website links were accessible from the University home page which is an indication on the value placed by the university on the library website in conformation with Bao(2000) assertion. The design of most academic library website makes it very difficult for users to locate information at the sites quickly and easily as revealed in the data collected from the sample academic library website which shows that only 46% and 41% of the sampled academic library website provide access to their online catalogue and had navigational aid available on each library web page respectively. Similarly, only 10% and 15% of the sample academic library website had a webpage for frequently

asked questions (FAQs) and help page respectively. The implication is that most users will be unable to get immediate assistance or answer to meet their query.

Table 2 Website aids and Navigation

Items	Available N= 37	
	No of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries
Link from university home page to library home page	22	59
Navigation aid available on each web page	15	41
Link from home page to an online catalogue OPAC	17	46
Search link found on library web page	7	19
Help page available	6	16
General Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) exist	4	11

Library contact Information

This section includes specific items related to the library contact information such as phone number, e-mail address, online chat, physical address of the library map showing the location of the library and a virtual tour of the library. The data collected revealed that none of the sampled academic library provides a virtual tour of its library and online chat with its patrons. Only 22% of the sample academic libraries provide their phone numbers and e-mail for contact by the patrons. This might be as a result of the perception that most of their patrons are domicile of their campus and no consideration is given to visitors or protective students.

Table 3: Library contact Information

Items	Available N= 37	
	No of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries
Phone number	8	22
E-mail	8	22
online chat/IM services	0	0
Physical address of Library	6	16
Map showing location of library	1	3
Virtual library tour	0	0

Library general information

The library mission and vision as well as staff directory was providing by only 32% and 30% of the sampled academic libraries respectively. Library policies, list of newly acquired resources as well as library news and even were provide by 14%, 8% and 19% of the sampled academic libraries respectively. This is a clear indication that most academic libraries sampled do not use the website to facilities access to information about its holdings, policies, staff information or services, which invariably can result to low patronage of the library.

Table 4: Library general information

Items	Available N= 37	
	No of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries
Library mission and vision	12	32
Staff directory	11	30
Library policies	5	14
List of newly acquired library resources	3	8
News and events	7	19
Opening hour	9	32

Links to electronic resources

This section was designed in order to identify the type of electronic resources the sampled academic libraries provide links to in their website. Table revealed that even through open access resources (journal, books, databases) and NUC virtual library website are free for access and use less than 41% of the sample academic libraries provide these links to their patrons. Access to institutional based subscription databases for developing countries such as AGORA, JSTOR and HINIARI was also limited to 38% of the sampled academic library. Table 5 also shows that access to reference resources such as dictionary, encyclopedia and eFI.net consortium electronic resources through the library website is only facilitated by 14% and 5% respectively of the sampled population. This indicate that majority of the libraries do not use their websites to facilitate access to quality electronic resources.

Table 5: Links to electronic resources

Items	Available N= 37	
	No of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries
Open Access e-journals	13	35
Open Access e-books	12	32
Open Access databases	12	32
Institutional Repository	7	19
Nigeria Universities Commissions (NUC) virtual library,	14	38
Access to consortium website eFI.net	2	5
Subscription based e-journals	10	27
Subscription based e-books	8	22
Subscription based database	9	24
Institutional bases subscription database (AGORA, HINIARI,)	15	41
Reference resources (dictionary, encyclopedias)	5	14

Library Online Services

Data collected from the sampled library shows that there is very little no provision for online services such as reference services, reference chat, ask a librarian, reservation form, Inter-library loan/Document delivery request form, online tutorial and course reserve. This result is not different from the result reported by Gbaje(2007).

Table 6: Library Online Services

Items	Available N= 37	
	No of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries
Reference Service	0	0
Reservation form	0	0
Ask a librarian	1	3
Reference Chat	0	0
Online Tutorials	3	8
Inter-library loan/Document delivery request form	0	0
Course reserves	0	0

Web 2.0 Services

Table 7 shows that RSS feeds for the library website and library facebook links are only provided by only 43% and 15% respectively. Other web 2.0 services used by very few Nigeria academic libraries include Flickr, and blog as indicated by 5% and 8% respectively. The low usage of library 2.0 is a clear indication that most academic library websites are none interactive and does not allow for collaboration with library patrons. This is despite the fact that wiki, blogs, RSS feeds, and podcast has been identified as prominent tools for academic libraries (Hanson and Cervone (2007)).

Table 7: Web 2.0 Services

Items	Available N= 37	
	No of Libraries	Percentage of Libraries
RSS feed available	16	43
Library Facebook	6	15
Library Twitter	0	0
Library Flickr	2	5
Library blogs	3	8

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

Nigeria academic libraries have over the past few years made their presence on the web by deploying their websites. One-third of the academic libraries studied use the library to provide and facilitate access to various types of electronic resources. The use of library website to provide general information and contact information on the library was explored only by very few academic library website. However this study also revealed that Nigerian academic libraries do not use their website as a platform to provide their patrons with online services, while very few libraries use their website to encourage interactivities and collaboration between the library staff and their patrons. It is therefore, pertinent that many Nigerian academic libraries redesign their websites to make it more functional, interactive and effective by

- a. Using the library website to point their patrons to electronic resources and provide online services that will enable their patrons use the library remotely
- b. Using the library website to provide Information about the activities and contact information of the library should be provided in the library website to enable
- c. Incorporate and use web 2.0 services in library and information service delivery.

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