

The Relevance of Optical Discs in Electronic Serials Management in Nigerian University Libraries

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Abstract

Serials are of great importance because it carries latest, current and up-to-date information. This paper examined the relevance of optical disc in electronic serials management in Nigerian University Libraries. The paper also look at the importance of optical disc in Nigerian University Libraries; how optical disc can contain large databases, reference works like encyclopedia, dictionary, books and magazines, etc. The paper also examine the problems facing serials management in the University Libraries in Nigeria and drawn conclusion.

Keywords: Optical Discs, Serials Management, Nigerian University Libraries

1. Introduction

Serials are often thought of as a distinct format. They are in print, non-print or electronic format. A serial is therefore regarded as a material that is in a tangible format, that is, recorded on paper, microform, magnetic media or optical disk and retrievable. The AACR2 (1978) categorically stated that a serial is a “publication in any medium”. Accordingly, a serial can assume a paper, microfiche or film, online or CD-ROM format, (Nisonger, 1998). Moahi (2002) expressed that many journals publishers have moved into the World Wide Web (WWW) as a second medium of publication in addition to the traditional print publications. However, Edoaka (2000) emphasised that in line with technological developments, it is becoming increasingly common to have the back issues of periodicals on microfiche, microfilm or CD-ROM.

The automation of serials processing, according to Farrington (1997), was the most significant development in the serials world in the 1980’s and early 1990’s. Automated processing enables a library to process more materials more quickly. Information technology (IT) refers to all forms of technology applied to processing, storing and transmitting information in electronic form. The physical equipment used for this purpose, as mentioned by Scott-Emuakpor (2002), includes computers, communication equipment and networks, Fax machines and even electronic pocket calculators.

Woodward, (1999) stated that automation has materially advanced the manager’s control of the serials collection through superior public access of information, improved claiming for missing issues, enhanced binding control, and a far wider range of financial and management reports. He emphasised further that library users generally find that Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs) are a considerable improvement over manually produced serials lists, which become out of date so quickly.

Serials are of great importance because they carry latest, current and up-to-date information. For the latest and up-to-date opinions and development within the various subject disciplines, one would do well to look in the appropriate journals. As explained by Elaturoti, Fagbeja, Kolade and Oniyide (1990), serials constitute an important part of the library collection because the information contained in them is more current than those in published books. Fayose (1995) affirmed that, “periodicals are useful because they are the most up-to-date resources in the library and that the articles in periodicals are often written by experts in the field, therefore, they are reliable and the articles are precise and not as cumbersome to read as textbooks”. Where recency of information is of prime consideration, the serials have a distinct advantage over the book (Adubika, 2007). According to Anunobi et al. (2010), majority of texts/monographs produced for knowledge have their contents derived from serials articles.

The researcher will like to discuss this topic under the following sub-headings:

- Serials and Electronic Serials
- Nigerian university and Nigerian university libraries
- What is an Optical Disc ?
- Types of Optical Disc
- The Importance of Optical Disc in Nigerian University libraries
- Problems of serials management and use in university libraries
- Conclusion

1.1 Serials and Electronic Serials

The influence of modern information and communication technologies (ICT) led to the transformation from print to electronic scholarly publishing. Scholarly electronic publications including serials according to Atilgan and Bayram (2006) are new formats of communicating research results and that their acceptance will not be easily

predictable. Today, university lecturers all over the world including Nigeria can teach, conduct research and publish by using computers connected to the Internet to search and retrieve needed information including serials from electronic catalogues, e-journals and large databases of digitised scholarly information. Existence of ICT has made it possible to digitised libraries. Digital libraries present several benefits to the users far beyond what conventional libraries can provide. Digital libraries have global reach through international networks like Internet. For instance, using web access, it is possible to search the OPACs of many of the world's libraries and to utilise a number of their online resources including serials.

- Serials are publications in any medium issued in successive parts and intended to be continue indefinitely.
- Serials are the bedrock of research activities, when ill-managed they cause dissatisfaction and distrust in the users.
- A serial is a distinctive title which is issued in parts, and each issue is published independently. It is expected to be published indefinitely. It includes: periodicals, Journals, News letter, Newspapers and magazines, etc (Aina, 2004)
- One of the most important documents of serial is journal. A journal is a medium for communicating research findings by scholars.
- It contains current and recent information, that is, it reports the latest development in the field.
- Electronic Serials: This categories of serials are in soft copy. Electronic serials are scholarly journals or intellectual magazines that can be accessed via electronic transmission.
- Smith, (2003) define electronic journal (e-journal) as any journal that is available online, that is, journals that are available both electronically and in print format.
- E- Journals by virtue of their nature exist in soft copy. By soft copy, I mean e-journal exists in machine language of zeros and one (0 and 1) and a good storage media is needed to retain them over time.
- Storage medium is the container that contains the information while storage device is the tools that write and read from the medium.
- Academic libraries have embraced electronic journals (e-journals) because of their accessibility and convenience.
- Patrons can instantly receive numerous full-text document from a database search and they appreciate the convenience of electronic access, yet electronic access does not come without complications.

1.1.1 Nigerian university and Nigerian university libraries

The university library is established with the mandate to support research, teaching, learning and extension services. The university library sources, acquires, processes and make available library materials including serials to accomplish its role of providing information to the university community, and to achieve this primary role, university libraries ensure that the appropriate serials are selected based on acquisition policy of the institution, acquired and processed (Anunobi et al., 2010). The job of information officer or librarian, according to Loho (1992), is to interact with the users to find out what they need or want to know, and to provide clients with the relevant information needed. He further emphasised that for effective use of the library and its materials, users can be alerted of the information available in the library by operating a number of current awareness services.

Library services is not that of propaganda, but that of generating, collecting, synthesising and disseminating up-to-date, accurate, unbiased and relevant information available in books, periodicals, bulletins, guide, abstracts, indexes, bibliographies and non-book formats which can be stored and retrieved whenever needed. The major objective of the university library as espoused by Aina (2002) is to provide materials and services that will now and in the future best contribute to the fulfillment of the objectives of the university. It is the duty of the library to identify the information needs of its users.

The success of every library's programme, therefore, could be easily measured in terms of its efforts in acquiring and managing relevant serials. Only the libraries that can afford to subscribe to relevant, up-to-date and adequate serials in print and electronic forms will be able to satisfy the research needs of their users. Where the serials are available and accessible, they are most likely to be utilised by the lecturers and to meet their research and publication needs. The greater bulk of serials used in Africa, as observed by Lawal (1982), are from countries outside Africa. Another dimension to this problem is that owing to the unavailability of foreign journals, most Nigerian and indeed African academics could not keep in touch with current research findings in their disciplines, (The Guardian, July 11, 2005:16).

Olugbile (2005) reported that "the first generation universities in Nigeria used to subscribe to no fewer than 5,000 journals annually but they now struggle to acquire less than 500, whereas foreign universities like Harvard in the United States subscribe to about 15,000 Journals annually". Ayorinde (2005) in his report said that no Nigerian university has met the prescription of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) that a library must acquire 10,000 books and journals annually, and be fully computerised. The present economic depression in Nigeria has greatly affected serials collection in the country.

The frequent high cost of production due to bad economy has led to frequent increase in prices of serials to the extent that majority of libraries find it difficult nowadays to renew subscriptions to current issues. This also affects the total cost of production, price, and acquisition of books and journals. Aina and Mabawonku (1996) testified to this that pricing in Nigeria has undergone frequent changes because of the continued devaluation of the national currency. This actually affects the total cost of production, price, and acquisition of books and journals. This deplorable situation has made it extremely difficult to sustain both local and foreign journals in the Third World Countries.

- The university library is an important component of any university institution and no university can lay claim to academic excellence without a good library to backup its teaching, research and public service mandates.
- The university library is at the heart of education in the university system and any effort made at improving the quality of university libraries would invariably result in improving the educational system.
- Without the university library the formal education is dead in terms of knowledge generation and dissemination (Okebukola, 2002).
- A university is as good as its library and the university libraries emerge simultaneously with the universities (the parent institutions).
- There are 27 federal universities libraries and 36 state universities libraries and 41 private universities library as at October, 2010 (FME, 2010).

What Is An Optical Disc?

- An optical disc is a removable disc on which data is written and read through the use of laser beam. Optical discs are used for sharing great quantities of data.

Types of Optical Disc

- There are three (3) basic types of optical disc in terms of storage capacity;
 - Compact Disc popularly called CD- eg
 - CD-R (Compact Disc-Recordable)
 - CD-RW (Compact Disc-Rewritable)
 - CD-ROM (Compact Disc- Read Only Memory)
 - Digital Versatile Disc/ Digital Video Disc known as DVD;
 - DVD-R (Digital Versatile Disc Recordable)
 - DVD-RW (Digital Versatile Disc Rewritable)
 - DVD-ROM (Digital Versatile Disc Read Only Memory)
 - High Definition Disc otherwise known as Blu-Ray Disc: This particular disc is not commonly use now but in the long run, it will replace the DVD.
 - DVD is about seventeen (17) times capacity of CD. Capacity of CD is about 650 Megabytes to 1 Gigabyte whereas DVD in its own case is 4.7 Gigabytes to 17 Gigabytes.

The Importance of Optical Disc in Nigerian University libraries

- Optical disc is important for the following reason:
 - Storage capacity
 - Durability
 - Low Mailing Cost
 - Telecommunication is not needed
 - Easy and Accurate Budgeting
 - It can be used directly by end-users

Optical Disc can contain:

- large databases
- Reference works like Encyclopedia, Dictionary e.t.c
- Catalogs
- Entertainment and Games
- Music, Culture and Films
- Edutainment
- Books and Magazines

1.1.2 Problems Facing Serials Management in the University Libraries

According to Salaam (2001) and Nisonger (1998), the major problem of serials collection is a drastic cut in the budget of Nigerian universities coupled with high inflationary trends in the present World's economy. Cowley (1990) emphasised that budget reductions will have an impact on periodical provision as well as other elements of materials purchasing. Even with substantial budgets, libraries will have to reduce acquisition if periodical price inflation continues to increase at the average 10 percent per annum. Kyrillidou (2003) quoted in Adubika (2007) reported that serials unit costs increased by 215% in 2003. According to the report, the average cost of a

serial subscription for Association of Research Libraries which was \$89.77 in 1983 rose to \$283 by 2003. Lawal (1982) averred that about 25% of university libraries have had to cancel some of their subscription due to inadequate funds. Salaam (2008), reported that the libraries of university of agriculture in Nigeria were not adequately funded and therefore affected the acquisition level of serials and services in the libraries. Foreign Exchange Market (FEM) which has greatly lowered the value of the Naira, majority of Nigerian academic libraries is unable to maintain subscriptions to foreign journals. As expressed by Igben (1991 – 92), “the average cost of a foreign journal which can now be as high as ₦1,000 per journal has put them out of the reach of many libraries”. The shortage of foreign exchange is making the efforts at acquiring books and journals frustratingly slow and sometimes seemingly not worthwhile. However, the users have limited access to serials due to poor collection management practices of the university libraries. Lack of basic infrastructure pertaining to internet connectivity puts users at a disadvantage in accessing electronic full text journals. Lack of adequate serials use support facilities and services in the libraries also affect the use of serials. The problem of misplacing, defacing, damaging, disorganising and mutilating of serials by dubious characters, insects, rodents and moulds as narrated by Akinbode (1998) also affect availability of and access to serials in libraries. The problem of availability and access affect the use of serials in the libraries. Where the serials are either not available or accessible, the lecturers can only make little progress in their research work and publications output.

1.1.3 Conclusion

- Electronic serials are expensive in terms of subscription cost and users may not be able to get access to soft copy when the subscription expired.
- Therefore, there is need for storage media and storage devices that will read and write into storage media for the benefit of users.
- Optical disc which is a family name of CD-ROM will surely solve this problem if it is embraced by Nigerian university libraries in management of serials.

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