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The Impact of Gender on the Use of the Digital Library at the University of Ibadan

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Introduction

Technology offers opportunities to be innovative, but not all e-learners have the same approach to the use of digital library resources. The level of ICT knowledge and use varies from one learner to the other. Not all information resources that e-learners need are available in electronic format. Many of our most valuable research materials are still print-based (Sharifabadi, 2006). There has been a shift away from purchasing print materials to be housed in a physical building towards providing access to the licensed digital resources made available over a computer network, librarians continue to work to revolve issues pertaining to distance delivery of resources that are available in digital format. Online catalogues and indexing and abstracting systems provide researchers with convenient access to bibliographic information about valuable scholarly documents.

With an increase in digital library collections that are accessible outside the library via the internet, students of the University of Ibadan still visit the University library frequently. Most students cannot afford to purchase laptops and lack search skills to access the Internet outside the library.

Digital libraries have become a force in transforming the educational system globally. Without information technology, there is little chance for institutions in Nigeria to develop. Women in developing countries may be more disadvantaged than men when int comes to information technology. For the sake of educational and social development, it is important that women in developing countries have access to these technologes (Olatokun, 2008).

Hargreaves (1997) describes education systems now as more "porous and permeable". In the traditional education system, learning takes place mainly in a classroom. The abundance and availability of digital information makes information ubiquitous. The University of Ibadan, Nigeria, was established in 1948 and was the first university library to introduce library and information science in West Africa.The universitys quest for effective organisation and dissemination of information led to the automation of the university library in 1993. The university library is now completely computerized. Castells (1993) asserts that it has become increasingly impossible for any society to innovate entirely by itself without transferring knowledge from other parts of the world and adapting it to the local

situation. Davenport (2000), claims that this creates a demand for a skilled labour force. Castells (1993) maintains that it requires human resources to adapt their skills continuously to the fast pace of technological change and apply research findings to local situations and be part of global scientific networks.

Olatokun (2008) states that the university sector in sub-Saharan Africa has a high concentration of skilled human resources. The training infrastructure outside the university system is weak and poorly developed. Swartz (2000) contends that in such a situation, society relies heavily on te universities to provide technology both in specific skills general learning ability to promote development. Universities are also challenged to establish connections with other knowledge-producing organisations. This ccalls for increased access to information resources. That includes a digital library with e-learning resources. Kachel (1993) believes that such innovations will be beneficial to students, cognitively and educationally. Mehta (2000) asserts that access to these resources, and cooperation among institutions, is essential for economic transformation and development.

Adomi and Ogbomo (2003) found that students used the library effectively, with more than 70 percent using the library daily. Though studies have been carried out on the use of university libraries, none has focused on gender in the use of digital libraries in Nigeria. this study can help bridge that gap. It is hoped that its findings can help library administrators make materials more useful, accessible, and relevant to all users.

Methodology

The instrument used for collecting data for this study was a questionnaire. It was made up of two sections. The first section sought demographic data while the second section contained structured items that were developed through extensive review of literature in order to ensure content validity of the instrument.

The population for the study was users who were in the University of Ibadan in the morning of 24th February, 2009, to make use of its services. Three hundred copies of the questionnaire analysed in this study were administered and returned from them by hand.

Frequency, percentage, and chi-square were used to analyse the data generated by the questionnaire.

The users who were present in the library at the time of the administration of the instruments were students from different levels of study and departments of the University. The three hundred respondents included one hundred and fifty-six males and one hundred ad forty-four females.

Findings

Table 1: Gender as a factor in digital library use

Reasons	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
To consult/use e-learning resources	104	66.7	73	50.4
To consult Library Staff on how to use the e-learning resources	138	88.5	130	90.3

To down load materials for my research activities and project works	160	106.4	166	113.1
To browse	88	56.4	68	47.2
For chatting	30	19.2	31	21.5
To do my assignments	105	72.6	121	77.6

X^2 = 11.35; df = 10; critical value at 0.05 level of significance = 18.31

Downloading information materials for research activities and project works attracted the highest response rate for both males 160 (106.4%) and females 166 (113.1%). The price of textbooks and other journals is very high in Nigeria, and most students cannot afford them. When books or journals are available more cheaply, they are usually discovered to be plagiarized materials with blank pages or illegible printing. Female respondents downloading information more frequently than males. Male respondents ranked consulting library staff on how to use e-learning resources second (88.5%). Doing assignments was ranked third by respondents.

The percentage of males and females differs with respect to their reasons for using the university digital library, but the difference is not significant, as the calculated chi-square (X^2) value (observed value) of 11.35 at 0.5 level of significance.

Table 2: Gender as a factor in locating library materials

How Materials are located	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
OPAC	69	46.0	52	36.9
Browsing	102	68.0	103	73.0
Assistance of library Staff	41	27.3	39	27.7
Assistance of friends	19	12.7	22	15.6

X^2 = 1.68; df = 3; critical value at 0.05 level of significance = 7.82

- Number of responses from 6 males
- Number of responses from 3 females

A majority of both sexes uses browsing to locate library materials, with 68% of male and 73% of female respondents. The percentage of males (46%) who use the catalogue as a location device is higher than that of the female users (36.9%).

In spite of difference in the ways males and females locate library materials, the difference is not significant, since the observed chi-square value of 1.68 is less than the tabled chi-square value of 7.82 at 0.05 level of significance.

Table 3: Gender as a factor in frequency of library use

Frequency of Library use	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Daily	101	68.7	100	71.9
Once in a while	35	23.6	18	12.9
Only when examination is fast approaching	7	4.7	12	8.6
Once in a week	5	3.4	9	6.6

X^2 = 7.3; df = 3; critical value at 0.05 level of significance = 7.82

- Number of responses from 8 males
- Number of responses from 5 females

The percentage of females (71.9%) who use the library daily is higher than that of the males (68.2%). Also, more females (8.6%) than males (4.7%) make use of the library only when it is very close to examination. The difference in the frequency of library use of both sexes is not significant as the calculated chi-square value of 7.3 is lower than the tabled value of 7.82 at alpha level of 0.05.

Table 4: Gender as a factor inhibiting effective use of the digital library

Inhibiting Factors	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%
Restricted Library Hours	54	36.5	43	3.1
Un-conducive Library Environment	46	31.1	66	66.4
Frequent interruption of Electricity Supply	114	77.0	102	72.9
Lack of searching skills	156	106.1	128	91.4

X^2 = 16.83; df = 9; critical value at 0.05 level of significance = 16.92

- Number of responses from 8 males
- Number of responses from 4 females

Lack of searching skills ranked first among inhibitors for both sexes (106.1% for males and 91.4% for females). This is because ICT is not fully implemented and embraced in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Some students own laptops but use them to watch films or listen to music. Frequent interruption of electricity supply

ranked second. The "Power Holding Company of Nigeria" (PHCN), which is responsible generating and distributing electricity, has not been able to ensure a steady supply of power. This has also deprived the students from effective use of the digital library especially at night.

The gender differences among these factors is not significant, as the calculated chi-square value of 16.83 is less than critical (tabled) value of 16.92 at 0.05 level of significance.

Recommendations

Respondents were asked to suggest ways to improve the use of the digital library. Suggestions included:

- Train and retrain library staff and students to enhance effective searching skills for the use of University digital library.
- Students in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria should be encouraged to be computer literate to access information personally on the Internets.
- The library should be open all night.
- Electric power must be upgraded to enable the university to function effectively at night.

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