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Introduction

In this age of globalization, the importance of information and communication technology (ICT) to people generally and students in particular cannot be overemphasized. This is true because ICTs facilitate quick and easy access to a wide range of information/information resources world wide. In fact, it is now difficult to imagine a world without information technology. In this digital age, tertiary institutions strive to be up-to-date in their curricula. The provision and use of ICT is part and parcel of the entire system, to both the students and the institutions. It is one thing to recognize the importance of ICTs and another to know if they are effectively used by students and academics. If ICTs are put to effective use, the essence of acquiring them is to a large extent justified vice-versa.

Ebijuwa (2005) defined ICT as tools used for collection, processing, storage, transmission, and dissemination of information. To Anyakoha (2005), ICT is the electronic means of capturing, processing, storing, and disseminating information. The American Library Association (1983) defined information technology (IT) as the application of computers and other technologies to the acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval, and dissemination of information. Computers are used to process and store data, while telecommunications technology provides information communication tools, which make it possible for users to access databases and link them with other computer networks at different locations.

With advances in ICT, electronic information in the form of electronic books, electronic journals, and the Internet have aunched the world into an information age. No institution or organization can still rely on only traditional printed information resource to perform effectively and efficiently. To librarians, ICT is a significant development that provides tools for managing the avalanche of information generated by modern society.

The Niger Delta University, with 9 faculties and 38 departments was established in 2000. The main library was established in 2002, while 9 faculty libraries were opened in 2005 and the Centre for Niger Delta studies library in 2008. Of the 9 faculty libraries, the Law library and College of Health Sciences (CHS) library are well established and in separate campuses from the main campus. Of all the institution's libraries, only the main library and the CHS library have ICT installations.

Role of ICT in Information Management

ICT provides libraries with capabilities for the location of information, storage and retrieval of information, and dissemination of information. Internet access enables libraries to locate information stored in other computers around the world. With online search facilities, information stored at different locations can be easily retrieved. Through the use of web pages, e-mail, and CD-ROM, libraries disseminate information. Digitization of library information resources, which converts print resources into electronic form, means that such information can be accessed from homes, offices, or any workstation connected to the Internet.

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Purpose of the Study

1. To investigate availability of ICT facilities in the Niger Delta University libraries.

2. To highlight the implication of the available ICT facilities in respect to library services to clientele.

Methodology

Survey research design was used. The population of the study was systems design engineers and librarians directly involved in ICT workings in the library. Data was collected through the use of a questionnaire designed for this study. The questionnaire on ICT availability was administered to ICT engineers of the two libraries under study. Libraries involved in this study are:

1. Niger Delta University (NDU) main Library.

2. Niger Delta University College of Health Sciences (NDUCHS) Library.

Findings and Discussion

Table 1: ICT facilities available in Niger Delta University libraries.

ICTs	NDU	NDUCHS
Computers	YES	YES
UPS	YES	YES
Scanner	--	--
Printer	YES	YES
Antenna Mast	YES	YES
VSAT Proxy Server	YES	YES
Satellite Dish	--	--
Reliable Power Supply	YES	IRREGULAR
Internet Connectivity	YES	YES
Websites	--	--
LAN	--	--
MAN	--	--
WAN	--	--
E-mail	YES	--
CD-ROM	YES	YES
Telephone Landline	--	--
Telephone Network	--	--
Projector	--	YES
Slide	YES	YES
Audio tapes	YES	Yes
Audio tape player	--	--
Video tapes	YES	YES
Video tape player	--	--

Table 1 shows ICT facilities available in Niger Delta University libraries. It should be noted that installations such as VSAT server and Antenna Mast are not exclusively for library services.

Computer and UPS: The libraries have Computers and UPS for clientele use in their libraries. The NDU main campus library has 14 computers and 14 UPS, but only 5 computers and 2 UPS are functional. NDUCHS libraries have 9 computers with UPS for library services, but only 4 in working condition. The computers have printers attached.

Antenna/Mast: The libraries have antenna/masts installed at various points on their campuses. These serve as telephone links between the institutions and service providers. With the mast, municipal area networking (MAN) can be carried out. People can then access information from their offices or workstations outside the library.

VSAT Server: Satellite VSAT is a network infrastructure capable of linking remote sites. The libraries have VSAT equipment at various stages of deployment. The institutions resort to more expensive VSAT communication equipment because of poor telecommunication system in the country.

Websites: None of the libraries has a homepage. They shoud have a library homepage to advertise the library product and interact with the global community. Free Internet resources located and held in the library system are posted on the library website for patrons. The library's bibliographic records/database is uploaded to form part of the global resources.

LAN: Only the systems in a particular library communicate, and share equipment like printer. Data can be entered from different units into the central server and shared. This reduces duplication and enhances use of library personnel.

MAN: None of the libraries has municipal area networking (MAN). Therefore no information resources can be accessed outside the four walls of the physical library. The libraries are not automated. Other computers on the campuses cannot access the library's information resources.

WAN: None of the libraries is networked with other libraries in wide area networking. Networking libraries facilitate resource sharing. Libraries must be automated to be able to participate in network arrangements with other libraries. With networking, duplication of efforts is reduced. Indexing and abstracting of newspapers, journals and other publications can be shared among the members of the network. Sharing of e-information resources such as e-books, e-journal with other libraries is made possible through WAN.

E-mail: This is a component of Internet connectivity. It is used for instant communication. Only NDU main library has an e-mail address.

CD-ROM: The libraries have CD-ROMs. CD-ROM is a storage device for many databases. Some books and journals are published in CD-ROM, and have CD-ROMs attached.

Reliable Power Supply: ICT requires a 100 percent reliable electricity supply to function effectively. NDU library has a reliable power supply. The NDUCHS library, which serves four faculties in their own campus, is plagued by a faulty power generating plant as at the time of this study.

It is sad to note that the Niger Delta University, Amassoa is a place without connection to any form of electricity (national grid and State gas turbine generated electricity). NDU main campus runs their power generating plant 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Audio-Visual Facilities: The libraries used in this study indicated that they have slides, audio tapes and video tapes. But none of them have players for these facilities. Only the NDUCHS in having a projector for slide playback which is not being used for library services.

From the findings above, the Niger Delta University libraries are ICT compliant. It is sad to note that none of the libraries is visibly working towards automation and providing complete ICT-driven information services. To operate Nigerian libraries without computer technology leaves the country decades behind advances in technology. Some of the implications of lack of adequate ICT facilities in the libraries are considered below.

Internet Facility

According to Ezomo (2006), the Internet is the gateway for libraries and information centres to enter the electronic information era and provides information generated by different organizations, institutes, research centres, and individuals all over the world. With the general poor funding of libraries, some cannot exploit electronic information resources in open access (OA) in the Internet. It is a double tragedy , as neither new printed resources nor access to current information provided to patrons is available (Nkanu, 2007). Libraries without Internet access may lose their relevance in the academic community. Most students, lecturers, and researchers are aware of what Internet provides, and they resort at a much greater cost to cybercafés to satisfy their information needs (Ajala, 2007). Libraries are not fulfilling their function of providing adequate information resources to support teaching, learning, and research in the institutions under study.

Web Access

Omekwu (2006) observes that Nigerian libraries generally lack functional Web access, and do not have homepages. Some institutions have an institutional website, but the library has no presence there. The websites of such institutions are being used for only admission purposes. A library homepage should be a component of an institution's website. Libraries must upload their bibliographic records to become part of global resources and should also be able to download information. As none of the institution's libraries have a web presence, they do not exist in the virtual environment.

Without vast array of Internet facilities, libraries will not be helpful to their clientele. It is only when they are skilled in the use of the Internet that they can teach other library users to navigate the World Wide Web (Nkanu, 2007).

Library Services

Generally, the Internet enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of library services. Queries from patrons are handled within the shortest possible time. Reference service which used to be a face-to-face encounter between the patron and the reference librarian have gone digital. Reference librarians can now meet patrons' needs irrespective of locations. Eyitayo (2006) listed various types of digital reference services to include:

- E-mail reference service
- Web forms
- ASKA services
- Chat reference
- We contact Centre
- Video Conferencing
- Voice over Internet Protocol (VOIP)
- SMS reference service

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With the Internet, poorly-funded libraries can have access to freely-available online resources. Such open access resources can be downloaded, copied, and printed, and bound with little cost.

Computers are also used to automate manual library functions. Acquisitions, cataloguing, circulation, and serials control are now automated, with much library software available in the market. Online public access catalogues (OPAC) have replaced the card catalogue. The libraries studied here have yet to join other libraries in bringing benefits of the above advances in information technology to their patrons.

In Nigeria, most of the tertiary institutions strive to provide ICT, especially Internet connectivity for student use, mostly in the libraries, ICT centres, and computer pools. Many tertiary institutions' libraries in Nigeria are not computerized, and are not Internet connected, and where some ICT facilities exist they are zealously guarded (Nweke, 2006). Faboyinde (2006) laments the fact that the application of ICTs in Nigerian tertiary Institutions shows consciousness of the significant role ICT can play in delivering library services, even though ICT is not fully embraced by most of the higher education libraries in the country.

Conclusion

The state of ICT availability for library services in the Niger Delta University libraries is not totally encouraging. There is awareness of ICT in the libraries, although the available facilities are very poor. Almost half the number of available computers in the libraries do not function. This makes electronic interlibrary loan impossible at this time. These academic libraries cannot bring the dividend of ICT to bear on their clientele. To sustain and maintain ICT services, an appropriate fee should be charged for various services so as to ensure total cost recovery without profit.

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