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**Utilizing Online Information Resources (OIRs) to Improve Library Services in Nigerian
University Libraries**

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Abstract

This study examined use of Online Information Resources (OIRs) to see how they might help Nigerian university libraries offer top-notch online library services. OIRs are crucial because students require current and complete knowledge resources. OIRs are readily available in digital form at university libraries in Nigeria. Academic e-databases contain these online resources. This study adopted the conceptual research approach; hence, in-depth exploration of literature was carried out to emphasize the issues in using Online Information Resources in libraries. The report outlined the development of OIRs and the additional information resources it offers to university library users. The databases, which include e-books and e-journals, among other things, are useful sources of informational content. The study's findings have been adapted to meet the information needs of users with shifting information needs. In order to encourage the production of new research and enhance efficient and effective delivery of information services, libraries can make use of cutting-edge scientific and technological innovations when users access online information resources. Librarians and other information workers need to be sensitive to, schooled in, and retrained on how researchers in the university community use OIRs to satisfy students' information needs.

Keywords: Library Services, Nigeria, Online Information Resources, Online Library, Research, Students, University Libraries, Users,

Introduction

A university library serves as a clearing house for information sources and takes center stage in the advancement of a research. According to Aina (2013), the university library is thought of as the center of the academic community since it is the only institution that can play a distinctive role in the university's primary goals of teaching, learning, and research. As a result, the library is a huge repository for knowledge. Eserada & Okolo (2019) characterized a university library as a system created, run, and supported by a university to support its facilities, staff, and students' informational, academic, and research needs. Hence, the university library is essential for fostering instruction, learning, and research. The acquisition, organization, preservation, storage, retrieval, and sharing of information in any format are the fundamental duties of university libraries in Nigerian universities. Books, non-books, printed and non-printed materials, newspapers, atlases, maps, gazetteers, and reference materials are all available at the university libraries. Ode & Omokaro (2007) stated that online information resources contain additional resources in the form of electronic books, electronic journals, online databases, CD-ROM databases, online public access catalogues (OPAC), email services, and internet services. Online-driven information distribution is one change that information and communication technology has made to teaching and learning in universities. Technology aids learning in libraries through Online Information Resources (Olubiyo, 2022). Primary to tertiary sources of information are all accessible through online information resources (Kattimani, 2006). Searchable databases, student-focused websites, internet search engines, electronic journals, news, textbooks, government information, internet information, email services, and restricted library materials are all examples of online information resources (OIR). These resources can all be accessed via the internet.

Online Information Resources (OIRs) are information sources that are made available electronically, such as subject-specific research guides, non-online indexes, electronic books and texts, electronic journals, library catalogs, online reference sources, sound recordings, and image databases (Orsu & Ugwu, 2017; Ternenge & Kashimana, 2019). Both print and online materials

are being added to the library's collection of teaching, learning, and research tools. In addition, many libraries, particularly university libraries, are working around the clock to access the millions of papers and books that are published online each year as a result of the exponential proliferation of knowledge and information (Ugwuany et al., 2013). However, university libraries are under a lot of pressure to give these materials to students due to a lack of funding (Orsu & Ugwu, 2017). Several programs have been implemented by some colleges to aid in the creation, instruction, and utilization of online information resources (Orsu & Ugwu, 2017). Online information resources refer to the collection of these millions of resources. Online databases, e-books, e-journals, e-electronic, and e-magazines are just a few of the different formats available for online information sources. According to Ugwu and Orsu, internet information sources are effective teaching and learning aids in higher education and offer resources for lifelong learning in libraries. Through a variety of free software programs, the internet offers people access to a vast amount of information and serves as a platform for global information accessibility. According to Obaseki (2008), these resources cannot be used without ICTs and services of technologies like the internet, computers, and the World Wide Web (www). These technologies are connected via optical cable, and the web is electronically powered and used for provision, selection, acquisition, processing, and transfer of information resources that are in soft copy format or electronic format.

Why do Libraries offer OIRs?

The supply of Online Information Resources aims to satisfy library patrons: applications and registrations online; sources of information for project writing; academic work and course work; completing assignments; as well as for private and individual usage (Sola et al., 2016). Online Information Resources facilitate efficient service provision. OIRs can be found on the internet. Email, chat rooms, file-transfer software like Protean, Gopher, and Telnet, charts, discussion forums for instant messaging, and the internet are also resources. Through the use of these services, libraries and information centers may be able to manage the information overload and availability present in digital libraries or hybrid libraries, which combine traditional print library resources with an increasing number of online resources (Khan, 2021). Numerous networks, most notably the internet, are used to connect the online resources in a digital library. It's known as a "virtual library." A library without walls is one where the collections are only accessible online through computer networks, engines, online databases, and data mining and do

not physically exist on paper, microform, or in any other tangible form. By acting as information stewards, true intermediaries between university library users and Online Information Resources, libraries can increase the quantity of resources available by acting as resource providers online. The major goal of the librarian, according to Aguolu & Aguolu (2002), is to maximize the social utility of library records of human civilization for the benefit of humanity. The university librarian needs information technology skills services, including technological context for digital librarians, tools, and guidelines because they are information specialists (Susan & Baby, 2012).

The Characteristics of Online Information Resources (OIRs)

The capacity to search many files simultaneously, retrieve information quickly, save searches for later use, print them out, and repeat searches are the fundamental characteristics of online information sources (Suseela, 2014). In order to speed up and save time for their users, the activities can be conducted by librarians, who must have the skills and expertise to combine the aforementioned into the services of the different departments of the library. According to Uloaku (2017), the organization, management, and dissemination of information through membership; registration in the circulation area; online subscriptions made in the acquisition area; online cataloging made in the cataloging section; resource sharing; and inter library loan are all significant roles in the provision of services in university libraries. Additionally, the internet can be used to provide services like reference, service, selective information distribution, and document delivery. OPAC, or online public access catalog, is another online information resource that the university makes available to library patrons. As a result, libraries can now reach both local and remote customers, particularly students who are taking distance learning courses, thanks to the advanced use of online resources.

Effective Library Services and Online Information Resources

The university library's role is inextricably linked to the efficient provision of services. The customers of university libraries should receive timely, high-quality services that are tailored to their needs. According to Wright (2004), who traced the evolution of online resources, when computers were initially developed, test databases were made to see how quickly they could store and search for data. These digital materials are referred to as online information resources. The reference department of university libraries was then used to access online resources. Users could do searches and receive results based on the author, publication title, subject, or keywords. According to Adeoye & Popoola (2011), providing users with pertinent materials is the

foundation of efficient library services. According to him, learning cannot take place unless students have access to the required knowledge and tools. The simplicity with which users can obtain the items they need from the university library is an indication of how well the library's resources are suited to satisfy users' informational demands. Oyewumi (2006) added that the use of the library is vital since it satisfies the conditions of its establishment's goals. The use of OIR in university libraries aims to increase the variety of information sources available there and create convergence by making them available digitally so that students, researchers, and other members of the university community can access them whenever and wherever they want in connection with high-quality services in the library's sections (Orsu & Ugwu, 2017). University libraries are customer-focused organizations that meet their customers' informational demands because they are located within a university and continuously serve as a conduit between users and creators of information (Lewis, 2019).

Online Information Resources Services and Current Awareness in University Libraries

Online Information Resources has become a key indicator of the current digital era. This has changed how libraries interact with their patrons. Okorie (2010) stressed once more how university libraries' adoption of digital technology has altered how their patrons access information resources. University libraries in Nigeria provide services utilizing networked internet resources to meet the information demands of their consumers. These services include, but are not limited to, SDI, CAS, e-document delivery, full text e-journals, online public access catalogs (OPAC), remote information services, newsletters, reports, and others. Digital references services (DRS), also referred to as online information resource services are provided by university libraries in Nigeria. These are services that allow library patrons to communicate with digital reference workers via computers or social media (Abdi, 2017b). The changing nature of information access has essentially overwhelmed today's library patrons, who are mostly tech savvy. They are influenced by what they see, extremely demanding, and want information regardless of location or time (Odewole, 2019). Abdi (2017a) highlighted the nature and processes of accessing these services, which include 'Ask a Librarian' and online reference chat. In synchronous reference services, customers can contact the digital services librarian at any time with a delayed time response by using video conferencing, web forms, collaborative digital references, digital robots, and other tools (Roopa & Krishnamurthy, 2016). The current awareness service is a crucial online information resource (CAS). Researchers and library

patrons are informed about freshly published works in their areas of interest using CAS (Naqvi, 2013).

Naqvi (2013) defined current awareness services as services or publications designed to alert scholars, researchers, readers, customers, or employees to recently published literature in their fields of specialization, usually available in special libraries, which service companies, organizations, or institutions in which access to current information is essential." These services or publications are typically available in special libraries. The university libraries' online information resources services are making progress toward their goal of meeting users' information demands. Prior to the adoption of ICT in libraries, current awareness services were provided by typing out tables of contents from journals and perusing publications to determine their contents. Today, it is done by preserving online searches completed in preferred databases and sending email alerts to customers with attachments of content tables. The development of ICT made using journals easier. An electronic publication in an electronic format that may be accessed in a digital setting is known as an electronic journal. The purpose of it is to complement the use of conventional library journals (Cole, 2004).

Users of information resources require more satisfying ways to access information and this demands its expansion (Ternenge & Kashimana, 2019). They are created using the proper harvesting equipment, organized in the computer's memory system, and then shown utilizing visual display technology. OIRs have become an essential instrument for scholarly communication as well as a vital information resource for researchers. The goal of university libraries has always been to improve teaching, learning, and research through quick access to and utilization of online information resources. This is accomplished by making information resources, easily accessible using innovative technology (Olubiyo, 2022). Through a computer work station, one can utilize an Open Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) to access the reading materials that are offered at a library. By applying the right search tools, the online public access catalogue can be accessed more quickly and conveniently.

Challenges of the use of Online Information Resources

University libraries in Nigeria currently face numerous obstacles and competition. The issues faced by university libraries include: insufficient power supply, poor internet connectivity, limited access to computer work stations, time-consuming tasks and unwilling personnel to assist with easy access (Sola et al., 2016). There is too much information to obtain, yet not enough

digital library use time, and there is poor power supply for the OIRs users (Orsu & Ugwu, 2017). Other issues with online information resources are weak computer facilities and user capabilities. Additionally, information security challenges, socio-technical problems, information pollution, and poor ICT management make it challenging to use OIRs (Eserada & Okolo, 2019).

Strategies for enhancing the use of Online Information Resources

Adequate information and communication technology equipments should be made available to university libraries in Nigeria, in order to increase the usage of OIRs. To raise knowledge of and accessibility to online information resources, university libraries in Nigeria should sign up for online database subscriptions. Increased bandwidth will make OIRs easier for researchers and library patrons to access and use. Retraining librarians in ICT skill acquisition and application is crucial to improving the efficiency of OIRs' service delivery. The search interface, search phrases, and search engines should be explained to library patrons. Libraries should assist and educate their patrons on the most recent search techniques, the most current information available, and the search phrases for improved access. Alternative power supply should be provided by university management to enhance the epileptic power supply in the university libraries. University libraries should be well-funded and run as a dynamic educational institution rather than being just a collection of books with a reading room attached.

Conclusion

This Study established that university libraries in Nigeria offer a sizable amount of OIRs in various formats. The difficulties brought on by poor library services can be reduced by providing constant training and retraining of librarians. Library management should address the issue of epileptic power supply, Poor internet access and IT equipments which makes it challenging for users to access Online Information Resources. If the University libraries are fully enabled, they have the potentials and competence to support the task of providing efficient OIRs services to users (Oyewumi, 2006).

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