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Awareness and Use of Open Access Journals by LIS Students at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria

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Introduction

Libraries around the world have experienced a sudden cut in budget over the years. However, costs of journals subscription have continued to rise without corresponding increases in libraries budgets. Each year, Nigerian libraries can only afford to subscribe to a very few low cost journals.

In short, Oren (2008) noted that the current system of scholarly publishing is unsustainable, as no library could be able to keep up with the annual price increases. However, Oren (2008) stated that the seeming out of control system of journals costs, has laid the foundation for the open access movement.

The publication of scientific journals began 1665 to enable researchers share their work quickly and widely and to establish priority of researchers investigating the same problems (Albert, 2006).says, journals published then could not pay the authors, hence, the tradition of writing for impacts rather than payment was in vogue and prevailed. But with the passage of time, "serial crisis" rooted in subscription price became barrier to information access and a serious concern to the stakeholders of scholarship. This was the remote cause of looking for an alternative model which turned out to be Open Access.

The primary advantage of open access journals is that the entire content is available to users everywhere regardless of affiliation with a subscribing library. The main motivation for most authors to publish in an open access journals is increased visibility and ultimately a citation advantage (Suber, 2006). Researcher citations of articles in a hybrid open access journals has shown that open access journals articles are cited more frequently or than non open access articles (Antelman, 2004).

Literature Review

Open access journals are scholarly journals that are available online to the readers without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. (Suber, 2006) Some are subsidized, and some require payment on behalf of the author. Subsidized journals are financed by an academic institution or a government information center, while those requiring payment are typically financed by money made available to researchers for the purpose from a public or private funding agency, as part of a research grant. (Suber, 2006).

Many studies have been carried out on awareness and use of open access journals. Bartle and Walton, (1996) argue that most researchers are still reluctant to the use of Open Access Journals; one of the major reasons for this is that they are not aware of what is available to them and what the services is capable of doing. In a similar fashion, the results of the user survey, at the University of Hong Kong library (Woo, 2005; cited by Korobili, Tilikidou & Delistarou 2005) shows that 68.8 percent of the respondents prefer to use open access journals compared to 31.2 percent who prefer to use printed journals. In Nigeria, studies such as those of Ureighe, Oroke and Ekruyota (2006) and Ajuwa (2003) found that access to and use open access resources is still low, the factors that may be accountable for the low use may be awareness and attitude of researchers.

Applebee, and Clayton, (1996) also found that ease, convenience, and accessibility were major factors influencing academic OAJ use.

Okoye, & Ejikeme, (2010) indicated that with open access, articles can be accessed online free of charge. He identified inadequate skills to navigate the internet, unstable power supply, unavailability of internet facilities, permanence of open access movement due to unstable financial support, lack of knowledge of the existence of open access journals in the internet as constraints to the use of open access journals by researchers.

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive research method using ex-post-factor type of design. The entire population for the study was one hundred and forty four (144) masters degree student of the Department of Library, Archival and Information Science, University of Ibadan, Nigeria. The masters degree students are divided into MLS I and MLS II (MLS I represent masters degree students who are still involved in course work, while MLS II are those that done with course work and are carrying out their research. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to 144 master's students and 140 questionnaires were retrieved. The questionnaire was divided into six (6) sections A – F. Section A, covers the bio-data information of respondents, Section B is the students awareness of open access journals, section C is the attitude of students towards the use of open access journals, section D is the student usage of open access journals, section E is the benefits of using open access journals while section F is the problems of using open access journals.

Research Questions

- The study sought answers to the following questions:
- What is the level of awareness of open access journals by master's degree students?
- What is the level of usage of open access journals by master's degree students?
- What are the benefits derived from using open access journals by masters' degree students?

- What are the problems militating against the use of open access journals by masters degree students?

Findings and Discussion

Findings for this study are presented in Table 1-7

	No	%
MLS 1	64	46
MLS 11	76	54
Total	140	100

Table1: Analysis of Respondents Bio-Data (student's category)

From table 1 above, one could observe that majority of the respondents were made up of MLS 11 students which comprises of 76 (54%) of the respondents while 64 (46%) were in MLS1.

	MLS1		MLS 11		Sub-Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Male	33	66	17	34	50	100
Female	50	56	40	44	90	100
Total	83	—	57	—	140	—

Table 2: Student's Gender

Table 2 shows that 33(66%) and 17 (34%) of the respondents were males, respectively of MLS1 and MLS 11. That is to say 50 respondents out of the 140 were male. Also, 50 (56%) and 40 (44%) of the respondents were females respectively of MLS1 & MLS11. The table (4.2) therefore reveals that majority of the respondents for the study were females.

Table 3: Analysis table showing awareness of respondents to OAJ

Respondents	Frequency	Percentage
MLS I	64	46
MLS II	76	54
Total	140	100

From table 3 above, 64 (46%) representing MLS I respondents agreed that they are aware of OAJ, also, 76 (54%) representing MLS II of respondents agreed that they are aware of OAJ.

Table 4: Analysis table showing the level of student's awareness of open access journals

S/N	Open access journals	SA		A		D		SD		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Library philosophy & practice	29	21	26	19	60	43	25	18	140	100
2.	D-library (Digital library)	20	14	28	20	53	37	40	29	140	100
3.	Information Research	16	11	22	16	64	46	38	27	140	100
4.	Libri	10	7	30	21	71	51	29	21	140	100
5.	African Journal online (AJOL)	13	9	22	16	80	57	25	18	140	100
6.	International Journal of Library and Information Science (IJLIS)	21	15	30	21	59	42	30	21	140	100

Table 4 above shows that majority of the respondents were not aware of library philosophy and practice as an open access journal, such that 60(43%) and 25(18%) that makes up to 85(61%) respondents out of the 140 that were not aware of its existence as open access open access journals. Also, it revealed that 71(51%) and 29(21%) of the respondents were not aware that libri is equally an open access journal.

Table 5: Analysis table showing the level of usage of open access journals (OAJ) by master's degree students.

S/N	Usage	HU		U		U		HU		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	I reference open access journals	68	49	49	35	14	10	9	6	140	100
2.	I print open access journals articles	72	51	54	39	9	6	5	4	140	100
3.	I access open access journals	86	61	28	20	18	13	8	6	140	100
4.	I have made links to other articles through open access journals	59	42	63	45	11	8	7	5	140	100
5.	I publish my work in open access journals	76	54	46	33	10	7	8	6	140	100
6.	I have downloaded articles from open access journals	83	59	38	27	14	10	5	4	140	100
7.	I cite open access journals	68	49	60	43	9	6	3	2	140	100
8.	I copy open access journals articles to flash	66	47	52	37	15	11	7	5	140	100

9.	I read articles in open access journals	77	55	39	28	18	13	6	7	140	100
10.	I browse for articles in open access journals	18	58	42	30	10	7	7	5	140	100

Table 6 shows the level of usage of open access journals by master's degree students. Thus, having access to open access journals came first with 86(61%) and 28(20%) responses. This is slightly followed by downloading of articles from open access journals with 83(59%) and 83(27%) responses as well as students' likeness to publish articles in open access journals with 81(58%) and 42(30%) responses. In like manner, almost all the items listed on the table received positive responses which might also be due to open access journals free cost.

Table 6: Analysis table showing the benefits derived from using open access journals (OAJ) by master's degree students.

S/N	Benefits	SA		A		D		SD		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	It provides free online access to the literature necessary for my research	84	60	38	27	12	9	6	4	140	100
2.	It increase impact of researchers work	78	56	46	33	14	10	2	1	140	100
3.	It makes for easy accessibility of the research work	80	57	47	34	10	7	3	2	140	100
4.	Self archiving is possible	82	59	38	27	12	9	8	6	140	100
5.	It helps in career development	68	49	56	40	6	4	10	7	140	100
6.	Publications are made free for author	76	54	50	36	12	9	2	1	140	100
7.	It reduces publication delay	70	50	36	26	22	16	12	9	140	100
8.	It provides increased citation to published scholarly work	73	52	40	29	18	13	9	6	140	100

Table 6 shows the benefits derived from using open access journals by master's degree students. The table revealed that: it provides free online access to the literature necessary for research with 84(60%) and 38(27%) positive responses. This is followed by the possibility of self-Archiving with 82(59%) and 38(27%) and easy accessibility of research works with 80(57%) and 47(34%) positive responses, similarly all the items listed on the table as benefits derivable from the use of OAJs received high positive response.

Table 7: Analysis table showing the problems militating against the use of open access journals by masters degree students.

S/N	Problems	SA		A		D		SD		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%

1.	Retrieval of too much irrelevant information	80	57	33	24	21	15	6	4	140	100
2.	Unavailability of internet facilities	73	52	40	29	17	12	10	7	140	100
3.	Download delay	67	48	54	39	15	11	4	3	140	100
4.	Limited access to computers terminate	78	56	42	30	4	3	16	11	140	100
5.	Lack of knowledge of the existence of OAJ	85	61	38	27	10	7	7	5	140	100
6.	Power outage	76	54	46	33	12	9	6	4	140	100
7.	Improper archiving of some open access journals	64	46	59	42	6	4	11	8	140	100
8.	Lack of internet search skills	83	59	28	20	12	9	17	12	140	100

Table 7 reveals that the lack of knowledge of the existence of open access journals on the internet as the greatest problem of master's degree students with 85(61%) and 38 (27%) positive responses as against 10(7%) and 7(5%) negative responses on the table. This is narrowly followed by lack of internet search skills with 83(59%) and 28(20%) positive responses as against 12 (9%) and 17(12%) negative response, while retrieval of too much irrelevant information comes next on the list with 80(57%) and 33(24%) positive responses as against 21(15%) and 6 (4%) negative responses. However, other listed problems on the table also received similar responses as indication of wide range of problems faced by master's degree students in their use of open access journals.

Conclusion

The study disclosed that student's use of open access journals is still far from expected. In other words, one would expect that student's citation of open access journals should dominate their research work particularly in this part of the world with great economic problems, but the situation is quite different. However, one thing that is clear is that students shows great willingness to use free sources of information as in the case of open access journals but have not been adequately informed of their existence in considerable number. Hence majority of the students were not aware of the existence of Library philosophy & practice, Libri and several others as being open access journals. This situation may have been due to the inadequacy and ineffectiveness of workshop/conferences and internet usage in this part of the world.

Recommendations

The study, having revealed the enumerated findings pertaining to master's degree student's awareness, attitude and use of open access journals above, the following recommendations were therefore made:

Postgraduate schools authorities with strong collaboration of head of Departments such as the one under study, the library and other stakeholders should intensify efforts in the creation of awareness of existing research/study aids under which open access journals falls. Such efforts would bring about the practical implementation of an aspect of library functions that talked about awareness creation through workshops/conferences.

Lecturers and instructors in the Department of Library and Information Science

should do more in keeping their postgraduate students abreast of existing/available information resources and not to leave them to cruel fate of being matured people. Instructors of information and communication technologies (ICT) should sit up by ensuring that students have effective and efficient skills in the use of their gadget and facilities such as internet search engines.

Students should equally be exposed to the disadvantage and not only the advantage of the use of open access journals particularly on the quality of contents by stakeholders.

Students should be careful in their likeness to publish articles in open access journals, Many database come up every minute on the internet with some of them having questionable authority, to be wary of this, students should know very well where they are sending their papers for publication, so that their future professional career would not be questionable by the committee of professionals in their fields of study.

Stakeholders should rise up to their responsibilities by adequately intimating students on the numerous existing open access journals available to enhance their studies.

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