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**ASSESSMENT OF THE USE OF ELECTRONIC RESOURCES AMONG
ADMINISTRATORS AND FACULTY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF CAPE
COAST**

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Abstract

The importance and significance of electronic resources to teaching and research is widely recognized by many researchers. With the advent of information and communication technologies such as the internet and the web, electronic resources have become a widely accepted scholarly resource for both students and faculty. They have also been shown to be more helpful especially to faculty and distance learners who may have limited access to library resources in traditional formats. Information and communication technologies have transformed most traditional libraries into hybrid libraries storing most of their resources in both print and electronic formats. The study seeks to investigate faculty's awareness and usage of online academic databases in order to determine the benefits they associate with electronic resources and the challenges they encounter in accessing electronic resources. A questionnaire was used to collect the data. This is because questionnaires are an inexpensive way to gather data from a potentially large number of respondents. A total of one hundred respondents were surveyed for this study. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) software version 16 was used to analyse the data collected into frequencies and percentages. The study established clearly that faculty members depend highly on online electronic resources not only for the purposes of research, but also to support their teaching. However, patronage

of the library's online academic databases was very low. This was largely because faculty members were either not aware of the existence of these databases or were not aware the library had subscription to these databases. In the light of the above revelations, there is the need for the library to heighten awareness creation among faculty members and student on the existence and usage of its electronic resources.

Keywords Library, Automation, Electronic Resources, Databases, Faculty, Respondents, University, Patronage, Technology, Subscription.

Introduction

Libraries over the past few decades have evolved in their quest to continue to play a vital role in ensuring quality education and research. With the advent of information and communication technologies such as the internet and the web, electronic resources have become a widely accepted scholarly resource for both students and faculty. Technological advances have brought about radical changes in the way modern organizations operate, and the library is no exception. It has influenced the way libraries gather, store, organize, retrieve and disseminate information (Sharma, 2009).

Due to new storage media and new channels for transmitting information, electronic libraries have become crucial to the complete formation of any university (Tomescu, 2009). Technological advances have greatly affected scholarly communication (Egberongbe, 2011; Sharma, 2009) because of their potential to deliver goods and services to a large target market irrespective of their geographical location. As stated by Sharma (2009) they are also essential in ensuring efficient retrieval and dissemination of information which is of prime importance to any academic/university library. Emerging technologies have changed the traditional library into automated, electronic, virtual and digital library (Saeed and Sheikh, 2011). It has also transformed most traditional libraries into hybrid libraries storing

most of their resources in both print and electronic formats. These libraries seek to complement the shortcomings of both traditional and electronic libraries in order to meet the demands of their customers. As rightly stated by Wu (2005) *libraries as information brokers cannot reject information because of its format of transmission but rather they must seek to harness its strengths and educate users on its weaknesses.*

According to Dadzie (2005), electronic resources are invaluable resources that complement print based resources. They have also been shown to be very helpful, especially, to post graduate students and distance learners who may have limited access to library resources in traditional formats (Egberongbe, 2011; Sharma, 2009). The University of Cape Coast has been part of the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries (CARLIGH) in Ghana which has been responsible for subscribing to electronic resources on behalf of both the public and private universities in the country since 1998. On the average the University of Cape Coast contributes ten thousand dollars US\$10,000.00 annually to the subscription of these databases. However, patronage of these electronic databases are generally considered to be low, this is because most students and members of faculty are either unaware of the existence of the electronic databases in the Library or are just not interested in them. This paper therefore examines usage of these online databases among faculty members.

Literature Review

The importance and significance of electronic resources to teaching and research is widely recognized by many researchers. According to Schaffner (1994), journals plays a vital role in scholarly community, as it serves the overall purpose of building a collective knowledge base, communicating information, validating the quality of research, distributing rewards and building scientific communities. Numerous academic institutions in Ghana are currently building substantial collections of full-

text journals and continue to increase access to various online databases. Through CARLIGH many of these institutions are able to subscribe to online journals and databases at much more economical rates as compared to individual subscription.

Many of these studies have focused on students, lecturers and scholars' usage of electronic resources and their feelings about its usage (Tenpori, 2003). Studies by Ray and Day (1998), revealed that 83% of students surveyed felt that using electronic resources saved them time and found it relatively easy to use. Another study by Egberongbe (2011) showed that 77% of lecturers preferred to use electronic resources compared to print resources because they found it less time consuming, even though 66% of them believed that electronic resources can never diminish the significance and importance of the print resources.

The availability of electronic resources does not necessarily illicit utilization. Studies by Dadzie (2005) to examine access and usage of electronic resources at the Ashesi University College indicated that even though general computer usage for information access was high because of the University's state of the art IT infrastructure, the usage of scholarly databases was quite low. This was attributed to the lack of awareness about the existence of these library resources. Also, studies by Ajuwon (2003) assessing the uptake of ICTs by health science students at the Ibadan University College Hospital, revealed that the use of the database was poor. This was due to the lack of awareness, lack of access to computers, insufficient training and the high cost of internet provision. Finance has been a major constraint to internet expansion and provision for most universities in Ghana. According to Ikem and Ajala (2004) the problem of funding is the major constraint of ICT application in libraries. They were of the view that the problem of funding is more than just acquisition of the hard and software but updating and maintenance are very crucial in order to sustain it.

On the contrary, some studies have attributed low patronage in electronic resources

by students and faculty to the poor state of ICT infrastructure in most universities in Africa. Shija (2009) assessing the usage of electronic resources via the internet in special libraries in Tanzania observed that awareness, lack of enough internet skills, poor infrastructure and connectivity were the major reasons for the low patronage of electronic resources. Again, Agaba, Kigongo-Bukenya and Nyumba (2005) examining the utilization of electronic information resources by academic staff of Makerere University identified the lack of good telephone services as one of the major obstacle to computerization and networking by libraries in Uganda. Their results indicated that 82% of respondents mentioned inadequacy of existing infrastructure and slow speed or low bandwidth as some of the reasons that prevented them from accessing electronic resources.

All the above reviewed literatures recognised the importance of electronic resources to teaching, learning and research. However, they all identified that the lack of awareness and poor state of ICT infrastructure as the causes for the low patronage of the electronic resources.

Objective

The purpose of this study is to examine:

- Faculty's awareness of online databases.
- Faculty's usage of electronic resources for their academic work.
- The benefits Faculty associate with electronic resources.
- Challenges Faculty encounter in assessing electronic resources.

Methodology

The study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The study was born out of a week-long sensitization workshop on the usage of electronic resources for faculty members organized by the Library and the Division of Human

Resource’s Training and Development Section of the University of Cape Coast. Questionnaires were used to collect the data. This is because questionnaires are an inexpensive way to gather data from a potentially large number of respondents. Often it is the only practical way of reaching a number of respondents large enough to allow the researcher statistically analyse the results of the study (Amedahe, 2002). The researchers personally administered the questionnaires. A total of one hundred and fifteen respondents were surveyed for this study. However, only one hundred questionnaires were completed giving an overall return rate of 86.95%. The statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) software version 16 was used to analyse the data collected into frequencies and percentages. The responses were grouped according to their various categories. In the case of open ended items the responses were coded for analysis. This was done by putting similar responses under one heading. Similar responses were considered as belonging to the same category.

Results and Discussions

Demographics

The total breakdown of respondents is shown in table one below

Table 1: *Breakdown of respondents*

Department	Number of respondents
Faculty of law /Administrators	30
Biological /Medical Sciences	15
Faculty of Education / Faculty of Arts	19
Faculty of Social Sciences / School of Business	16

School of Physical Sciences/ School of Agriculture	20
Total	100

Faculty's awareness of online databases

Research question one was asked to seek information from faculty members about their knowledge of online academic data bases. The study revealed that all the faculty members had some level of knowledge and experience when it comes to internet usage. Table 2 showed that as high as 49.56% of the respondents used the internet for academic work while 4.35% used it for official or clerical work such as e-mailing and visiting other social networking sites. The study also showed that, majority (92%) of the faculty members was aware of the existence of online academic databases as indicated in Table 3. However, upon further probing most of them did not know that these data bases were being subscribed to by the university library on behalf of the university.

Table 2: *Purpose for using the internet*

Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Academic	57	49.56
Personal	53	46.09
Official work	5	4.35
Total	115	100

Table 3: *Library online databases*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	92	92.00
No	8	8.00
Total	100	100.00

A further question was asked to enquire from them the databases that they were aware of. The response is shown in Table 4. From Table 4, Emerald is the most popular (17.97%) database. This is followed by Sage journal (27 responses representing 12.44%) with the least being BIOONE (7 responses representing 3.24%). This can be attributed to the fact that the majority of the respondents were from the humanities as shown in table 1. A critical analysis of the result therefore meant that, general awareness of the library's academic databases was high, but patronage was low and therefore there is the need to intensify sensitisation programmes through seminars, workshops and symposiums, to increase patronage.

Table 4: *Awareness of Academic databases*

Item	Response	Percent
Emerald	39	17.97
Ebsco host	24	11.06
Jstor	26	11.98
Hinari	26	11.98
Taylor and Francis	16	7.37

Sage journals	27	12.44
Cambridge University	21	9.68
Science direct	16	7.37
African Journal Online	15	6.91
BIOONE	7	3.24
Total	217	100.00

Access to web resources is on the increase with majority of students and faculty surfing the internet vigorously for one piece of information or the other. However, the means of accessing online academic information keeps changing with the advancement in information and communication technology. According to Upadhyay (2008), many academic institutions are currently building substantial collections of full text journals and continue to increase access to various online databases and the University of the Cape Coast is no exception. The quality of online academic databases is on the rise and as such has made them indispensable especially for research institutions.

However, the study revealed that the patronage of the library's online academic resources among faculty members is low. This is also evident in the number of faculty members who participated in the seminar. This finding was in agreement with studies conducted by previous researchers (Shija, 2009; Upadhyay, 2008; Dadzie, 2005; Ajuwon, 2003). Dadzie (2005) in examining access and usage of electronic resources at the Ashesi University College indicated that even though general computer usage for information access was high because of the University's state of the art IT infrastructure, the usage of scholarly databases was quite low. Therefore, the need to increase awareness through the development of interactive

programmes where faculty can actually bring the attention of librarians to journals they find to be more useful.

Faculty's usage of electronic resources

This research question was to seek how often respondents accessed academic information online whether from an academic database or the general web. It also sought to find out whether faculty members were accessing the library's subscribed online databases. Table 5 indicated that the majority (52.0%) of the respondents always accessed the internet for academic information while 11% occasionally accessed the internet for academic information. This implies that the demand for online electronic resources is very high among faculty members.

Table 5: *Frequency of usage*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always	52	52.0
Very Frequently	37	37.0
Occasionally	11	11.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 6 shows which of the library's online academic database is being accessed by faculty. Table 6 indicate that the most frequently accessed database is Emerald (24 responses) followed by Ebsco Host (23 responses). This can be attributed to the fact that the majority of the respondents were in the field of the humanities. However, table 6 revealed that the majority of the respondents (n=83), even though were aware of the existence of these databases still did not use them.

Table 6: *Electronic Resources accessed by respondents*

Item	Response
Emerald	24
Ebsco host	23
Jstor	13
Hinari	23
Taylor and Francis	5
Sage journals	14
Cambridge University	7
Science direct	9
African Journal Online	9
BIOONE	4
None	83
Total	217

Table 7 indicated the format in which respondents preferred their electronic information. Seventy seven percent (77%) of the respondents preferred to access online resources in portable documents formats (PDF) while 24% preferred the hyper text mark up language (html) formats. This can be attributed to the aesthetic appeal of most PDF documents.

Table 7: Preferred format

Response	Frequency	Percent
Pdf	76	76.0
Html	24	24.0
Total	100	100.0

The study revealed that all faculty members had some knowledge on the use of the internet with 52% of them always using the internet for either academic or personal reasons. This concurred with studies by Ray and Day (1998) and Renwick (2005) who were of the view that faculty is quite knowledgeable about the availability of electronic resources via the internet in general. This also agreed with studies by Jirojwong and Wallin (2002) who stated that those who were more computer literate tended to use the Internet as the e-resource of choice. Another study by Egberongbe (2011) showed that 77% of lecturers preferred to use electronic resources compared to print resources because they found it less time consuming. However, most of them sought for academic information from other databases other than the library's subscribed online databases because of the various constraints they encounter when accessing the library's online academic databases. These constraints contributed significantly to the low patronage of the library's online academic databases by faculty members.

Challenges Faculty Members encounter in accessing electronic resources

This question was asked to find out from faculty members the challenges they encounter in accessing online academic resources. The result from table 8 revealed that the challenges facing faculty members in accessing online academic resources are (1) Charges to access e-Resources (18.31%), (2) lack of proper guidance (19.31%), (3) Slow nature of the internet (35.92%) and (4) Lack of knowledge about tools & techniques used for searching and retrieving e-Resources (8.45%). This meant that there is the need to intensify awareness creation and education on the accessibility, availability and usage of the library's online academic databases.

The results of the study concurred with studies by Agaba et al., (2005), Ajuwon (2003) and Shija (2009). Ajuwon (2003) assessing the uptake of ICTs by health

science students at the Ibadan University College Hospital identified insufficient training and the high cost of internet provision as major constraints to the access of online electronic resources. Shija (2009) and Agaba et al., (2005) mentioned the lack of enough internet skills, poor infrastructure and slow speed or low bandwidth or connectivity as the major reasons for the low patronage of electronic resources. This clearly shows that to elicit patronage there is also the need not only to increase awareness but also improve on the existing ICT infrastructure to make them reliable and convenient to its users.

Table 8: *Constraints to effective access to online electronic resources*

Constraint	Response	Percent
Charges to access e-Resources	26	18.31
Lack of proper guidance	27	19.01
Lack of proper e-Resources	15	10.56
Slow nature of the internet	51	35.92
Lack of portability in contrast with original print materials	11	7.75
Lack of knowledge about tools & techniques Used for searching and retrieving of e-Resources	12	8.45
Total	142	100

The benefits Faculty associate with electronic resources

Electronic resources have been proven by several studies to be essential to teaching and research. This research question was asked to determine the level of benefit faculty attached to the use of electronic resources. Table 9 revealed that majority

(46.0%) of the respondents found electronic resources to be highly beneficial while 13% of the respondents were neutral about the benefit they derive from using electronic resources. Further probe as to why they were adamant about the benefits of electronic resources revealed that these respondents were of the opinion that electronic resources, even though beneficial, cannot replace print resources. Also, most of the respondents (87%) who found electronic resources to be either beneficial or highly beneficial mentioned that electronic resources saved them time and found it relatively easy to use. This concurred with findings by Ray and Day (1998) and Egberongbe (2011).

Table 9: *Benefits of E-resources*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Highly Beneficial	46	46.0
Beneficial	41	41.0
Neutral	13	13.0
Total	100	100.0

Customer satisfaction has been used frequently in most literatures to describe or measure how library products and services meet or surpass user expectation. Table 10 indicates the level of satisfaction faculty attribute to the use of electronic resources. Majority of the respondents (47%) were satisfied with the quality of information they obtained from electronic resources while 40.0% were highly satisfied. This clearly shows that faculty members place a high premium on information they obtain from online electronic databases. This concurred with findings by Mirza and Mahmood (2012) which revealed that users of the Pakistani university libraries are satisfied with the information they obtain from online databases.

Table 10: *How satisfactory*

Response	Frequency	Percent
Highly Satisfied	40	40.0
Satisfied	47	47.0
Neutral	11	11.0
Dissatisfied	2	2.0
Total	100	100.0

Conclusions

The real purpose of any academic library is to provide its users with relevant up to date information in order to fulfill its core function of facilitating teaching, learning and research. In today's contemporary world where the internet has become crucial to the survival of any establishment, it is incumbent on academic libraries to provide its users with access to online academic databases. The study established clearly that faculty members depend highly on online electronic resources not only for the purposes of research, but also to support their teaching. However, despite this overwhelming revelation it was realized that the patronage of the library's online academic databases was very low. This was largely because faculty members were either not aware of the existence of these databases or were not aware that the library subscribes to these databases.

This also shows clearly that faculty members sought for access to online electronic databases through other means other than the library. In their ever increasing demand for subscriptions to more databases with journal titles of international repute faculty members experienced some constraints, prominent among these were the slow nature of the internet especially during working hours and the lack of proper guidance on how to access these online databases. In the light of the above revelations, there is

the need for the library to heighten awareness creation among faculty members and students on the existence and usage of these important resources. Also, there is the need for a conscious effort by the university authorities to improve on the University's ICT infrastructure in order to facilitate access to the online databases from wherever they may be located.

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