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# AWARENESS AND USE OF ELECTRONIC BOOKS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS: A SURVEY

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## **Abstract**

The increasingly growth of electronic books has created an enabling access to and use of e-prints within the confine of one's environment; thereby providing wider accessibility and usability. However, the study investigated the awareness and use of electronic books among undergraduate students in Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. A survey research design was adopted and structured questionnaire was used to collect data. Descriptive statistics was used to answer the research questions. The study revealed that most of the respondents are partially aware of the availability of e-book in their area of specialization, dedicated e-book reader devices (e.g. Kindle, Sony reader) and e-book open access sites. The findings also indicated that they are not aware on how to access e-books in the library webpage. It also reveals that they do not use e-book from the university's library webpage, as long as they could get the desired books from the university library. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents use e-books for project/research work, term paper, course assignment, learning more about a subject and for seminar presentation. The study shows that most of the respondents preferred PDF as a convenient format to use e-books. The challenges encountered are inactive/dead link, unaware of where to locate needed e-books and poor Internet connection. The study recommends that university libraries as a matter of necessity, should at intervals, sensitize and equip students with the knowledge and skills to access and use e-books. They should also provide effective Wi-Fi platform to enable effective access to Internet.

**Keywords: Awareness, Electronic Books, Use, University Libraries,**

## **Introduction**

E-books are essential form of electronic resources that meets the demand of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century progression to quality education. It is now a fundamental part of electronic learning that builds and support educational systems. Despite the growing popularity of e-books and e-book readers, and the perceived value of e-books as relatively low-cost, easily accessible resources in education, a compelling pedagogical rationale and methodology for the adoption of these technologies, is yet to be articulated in relation to contemporary teaching philosophies and practices (Smith, Kukulska-Hulme and Page, 2012). This rapid technological change, greatly influence the format of information resource carriers which is a welcome development in university libraries in Nigeria but their readiness to cope with this rapid development becomes an issue (Subair, Oriogu and Ogbuiyi, 2016). In Nigeria, the emergence and integration of e-books has been at a slow pace, but in the last few years electronic books are gradually representing an increasingly important component of the resource collection of academic libraries which is evident in the accreditation requirements for libraries by the Universities Commission (Salau, 2015). It is more important than ever for librarians to understand when, how and why clients use e-books in order to design services that meet existing needs” (Bakkalbasi & Goertzen, 2015, p. 253). This is why the study tends to investigate the awareness and use of electronic books among undergraduate students in Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria.

## **General Overview of Afe Babalola University Ado-Ekiti (ABUAD)**

Afe Babalola University is a private owned academic institution founded in 2009 by Aare Afe Babalola. It is sited in Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Nigeria. The university operates college-based libraries with functional and standard electronic library. The college libraries have rich collections of information resources (print and non-print resources) to achieve the objectives of the parent institution. Also, there is an effective Wi-Fi platform. The electronic resources can be accessed via the library webpage and the college libraries are well equipped with modern facilities to enhance effective use and visibility of intellectually output.

## **Literature Review**

The arrival of e-book brought a new look to collection development procedure; this is as a result of the change to electronic mediated texts (Subair, Oriogu and Ogbuiyi, 2016). The entry of the e-book format into this market has led to a major shift, from the acquisition of printed books to the acquisition of the electronic alternative (Maceviciute, Wilson, Gudiničius, & Šuminas, 2017). Such developments generate pressures on libraries to make research output more widely available through search engines and open access mechanisms which in turn result in rising accessibility of research material via downloads and citations (Rosenzweig 2005). However, several authors have viewed e-book as a text or book that can be read in a digital format using technology devices such as computers, smart phones, tablets or any portable reading machine (Nelson, 2008; Tripathi & Jeevan, 2008; Liaw & Huang, 2014). Then, Baki (2010) asserts that, it a text designed to be read over technology devices, making it different from printed books by offering some extra features that allow users to interact with the text through the use of sound, visuals and links. According to Rosso (2009) advantages such as mobility, saving physical space, convenience, saving time and money, ease-of-use are the primary motivations in preferring e-books. They allow teachers and students to easily access them online at any time and wherever needed (Lam, Lam, & McNaught, 2010; Letchumanana & Tarmizib, 2010; Doering, Pereira & Kuechler, 2012). Despite of the cost effectiveness, convenience and portability of e-books, they lack universal standards and the compatibility of hardware and software (O'Hare & Smith, 2012). Also, many e-books are difficult to access because they are not globally available or not offered in the e-book format (Liaw & Huang, 2014). As, many students may not know how to use the e-book readers and require specific training (Baki, 2010). Furthermore, heavy use of e-books may result in health problems such as headaches and eyestrain (Liaw & Huang, 2014). In spite of the disadvantages of e-book, it has been highly regarded as viable e-resources that meets the expectation of students in the digital world. Many academic institutions began to embrace the use of e-books through their libraries (Wu & Chen 2011). Then Payare & Lal (2014), affirmed that from the day of its introduction, libraries realized the importance of e-book and made them as part of their collection development. Libraries acquire e-books through subscription or purchase licenses polices and provide them to the user via library OPAC, website etc. (Hermon, 2007). Margaret Allen and Sarah Kaddu (2014) revealed that the sources of eBooks include: open access, library subscriptions, websites, Google, online book stores such as Amazon, itunes, and courtesy of world readers.

More recently, the development of e-books has been forcing libraries to review their collection development policies and rethink how they build collections, organize OPACs and how they provide information services to their patrons (Marques, 2012). This revolution in the opinions of enthusiasts is destined to not only change the reading habits of many but has also been widely acknowledged as a solution to the paucity of textbooks which is most pronounced at the tertiary level of education in Nigeria (Thomas, 2011).

Moreover, occasional published evidence shows that students still prefer print texts for learning (Shepperd, Grace, & Koch, 2008; Woody, Daniel, & Baker, 2010). Shelburne (2009) received 1,547 responses. Fifty seven percent of these reported that they had used e-books. Approximately 41% of respondents who had not used e-books indicated that, it was because they did not know they were available, 15% that they did not like to read from the screen, 10% stated that they did not know how to find e-books, and 7% that they had a preference for printed books. A Spanish survey of the students in information science departments has shown the same preference for printed books, and established that only six per cent of respondents have tried to access or download e-books at their university library and, despite affordances, such as the immediacy of access and comfort of staying in one place, have experienced a lack of competency in navigating the platforms, of downloading the content, the scarcity of e-book titles, the lack of discovery tools and the low speed of download (Navarro-Molina, Alonso-Arroyo, Vidal-Infer, Valderrama-Zurian and Aleixandre-Benavent, 2015). The findings of Khalid (2017) indicate that students at SQU have multiple and diverse experiences with e-books, but do not necessarily prefer the electronic format over print for their academic experiences. Wang and Bai (2016) have explored the awareness of, and use of e-books, by students at Zhejiang University in China, finding low awareness levels and differences in existing use of e-books between undergraduate and graduate students and an overall preference for printed books.

In Nigeria, quite a little studies have been done on the level of utilization of e-book. The study of Thomas (2011) indicated that electronic books are still in the early stages of development in Nigeria as in most developing economies. Six years later, the study of Rabi, Ojukwu, Oladele (2016) shows that e-books penetration in libraries is still very low. Bakrin and Bello (2017) in their study indicate that none of the respondents agreed that his library was involved in a deliberate effort to acquire e-books on the basis of individual titles. On the contrary, the findings of Adeyinka et al (2018) demonstrate that LIS undergraduate students' still use e-books more compare to print

books. Gani (2014) analyses the management of e-libraries in northwest Nigerian universities and finds that the e-libraries have online databases, e-journals and e-books as the available e-resources even though he observes that there were deficiencies in the areas of infrastructure as well as information technology literacy among staff. It is more important than ever for librarians to understand when, how and why clients use e-books in order to design services that meet existing needs” (Bakkalbasi & Goertzen, 2015).

### **Objective of the Study**

The main objective of the study, is to investigate the awareness and use of electronic books among undergraduate students. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- a. ascertain the level of awareness of e-book in the library among undergraduate students;
- b. determine the use of e-books among undergraduate students;
- c. examine the purpose of use of e-books among undergraduate students;
- d. determine the most preferred e-book format used among undergraduate students;
- e. find out the challenges of the use of e-book among undergraduate students.

### **Methodology**

Survey research method was adopted for the study and structured questionnaire was used to collect data. A total of hundred and thirty (130) undergraduate students of Afe Babalola university were sampled in the library, out of the total number; one hundred and ten (110) questionnaires were retrieved for analyses using descriptive statistics to answer the research questions. However, random sampling technique was used to administer the questionnaire.

### **Analysis of Findings**

#### **Demographic Information**

#### **Figure 1: Distribution of the Respondents by College**

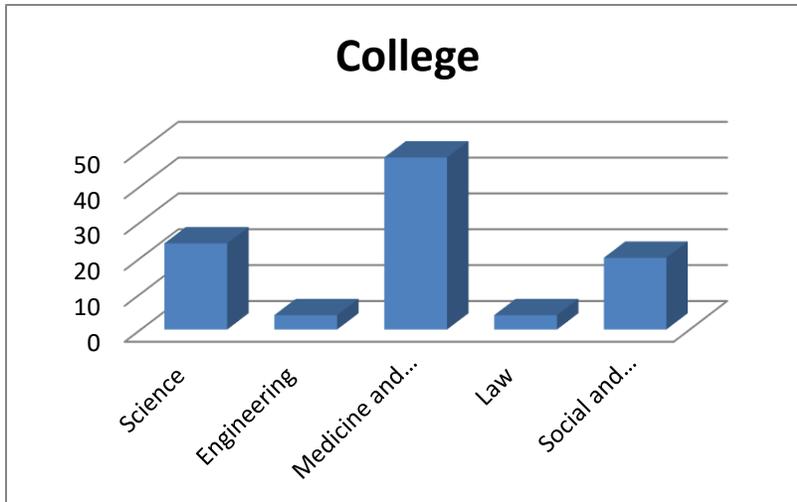


Figure 1 shows that 20 (20.0%) of the respondents were from the college of Social & Management Sciences, 24 (24.0%) from Sciences, 4 (4.0%) were from Engineering, 48(48%) were from Medical & Health Sciences, and 4(4%) were from Law.

**Figure 2: Distribution of the Respondents by Gender**

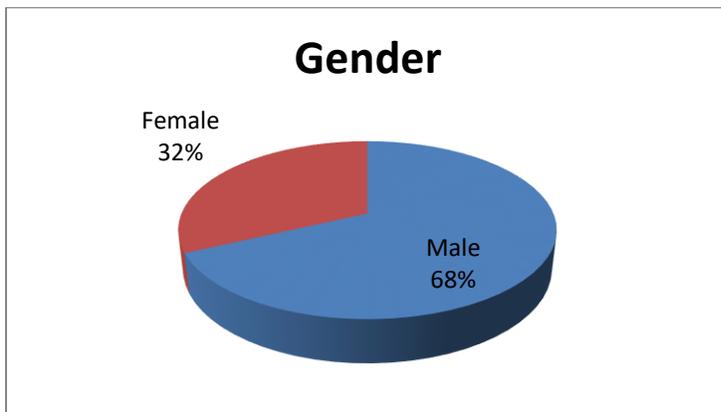


Figure 2 shows that 68(68%) of the respondents were males and 32(32.0%) were females.

**Figure 3: Distribution of the Respondents by Age**

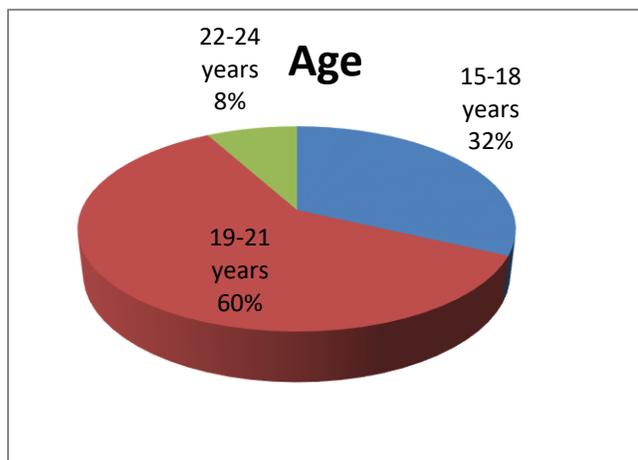


Figure 3 shows the age bracket of the respondents, were 15-18 years (32%), 19-21 years (60%) while 22-23 years (8%).

**Table 1: Level of Awareness of E-Book in the Library Webpage**

Awareness of E-Book		Freq.	Percentage %	Mean	Std. D
Are you aware of the availability of e-book in the area of your specialization?	Not Aware	Nil	Nil.	2.68	.469
	Partially Aware	68	68.0		
	Fully Aware	28	28.0		
Are you aware of how to access e-books in the library webpage?	Not Aware	40	40.0	1.92	.849
	Partially Aware	28	28.0		
	Fully Aware	32	32.0		
Are you aware of the dedicated e-book reader devices (e.g. Kindle, Sony reader)?	Not Aware	32	32.0	2.00	.804
	Partially Aware	36	36.0		
	Fully Aware	32	32.0		
Are you aware of e-book open access sites?	Not Aware	20	20.0	2.04	.665
	Partially Aware	56	56.0		

	Fully Aware	24 100	24.0		
Are you aware that you can download e-book to mobile devices and laptops?	Not Aware	4	4.0	2.76	.515
	Partially Aware	16	16.0		
	Fully Aware	80	80.0		

Table 1 shows the rating of the means of awareness to E-book by respondents as follows: “Are you aware that you can download e-book to mobile devices and laptops” has the highest mean score rating (2.76), and was followed by “Are you aware of the availability of e-book in the area of your specialization” (2.68), “Are you aware of e-book open access sites” (2.04), “Are you aware of the dedicated e-book reader devices (e.g. Kindle, Sony reader)” (2.00), and “Are you aware of how to access e-books in the library” (1.92).

**Table 2: Use of E-Books**

Use of e-books		Frequency	Percentage %	Mean	Std. D
I am confident and proficient in the use of e-book	Yes	97.0	97.0	2.03	.171
	No	3.0	3.0		
I prefer to use subscribed e-book by the library on my subject area	Yes	4	4.0	1.96	.197
	No	96	96.0		
I mostly read downloaded e-book in the library	Yes	88	88.0	1.88	.327
	No	12	12.0		
I download e- book to my computer or laptop for later use	Yes	84	84.0	1.84	.368
	No	16	16.0		

Read on a device mobile (e.g. iPhone, Smart phones, blackberry, etc.	Yes No	100 Nil	100.0 Nil	2.00	.000
Read on a dedicated e-book reader (e.g. Kindle, Sony reader)	Yes No	56 44	56.0 44.0	1.56	.499
I use e-books from the University's website	Yes No	49 51	49.0 51.0	1.49	.502
Even though I can get what I need in books in the library, I still prefer to use e-book	Yes No	49 51	49.0 51.0	1.49	.502

Table 2 shows the rating of the ways of use of E-book by respondents as follows: “I am confident and proficient in the use of e-book” has the highest mean score rating (2.03), and was followed by “Read on a device mobile (e.g. iPhone, Smart phones, blackberry, etc.” (2.00), “I prefer to use subscribed e-book by the library on my subject area” (1.96), “I mostly read downloaded e-book in the library” (1.88), “I download e- book to my computer or laptop for later use” (1.84), “Read on a dedicated e-book reader (e.g. Kindle, Sony reader)” (1.56), “I use e-book from the University's website” (1.49) and “Even though I can get what I need in books in the library, I still prefer to use e-book” (1.49).

**Table 3: Purpose of Use of E-Books**

Purpose of Use of e-Books		Frequency	Percentage %.	Mean	Std.D
For project/research work	Yes	87	87.0	1.87	.338
	No	13	13.0		
For term paper	Yes	84	84.0	1.84	.368
	No	16	16.0		

For course assignment	Yes	100	100.0	2.00	.000
	No	Nil	Nil		
Learning more about a subject	Yes	71	71.0	1.71	.456
	No	29	29.0		
For seminar presentation	Yes	61	61.0	1.61	.490
	No	39	39.0		

Table 3 shows the rating of the purpose of use of E-book by respondents as follows: “For course assignment” has the highest mean score rating (2.00), and was followed by “For project/research work” (1.87), “For term paper” (1.84), “Learning more about a subject ” (1.71), and “For seminar presentation” (1.61).

**Table 4: Most Preferred e-book format**

Preference	Frequencies	Percentage
Text	9	9.0%
PDF	66	66.0%
HTML	19	19.0%
DOCX	6	6.0%

Table 4 shows the most preferred e-book format by respondents as follows: Text 9(9.0%), PDF 66(36.0%), HTML 19(19.0%) and DOCX 6(6.0%).

**Table 5: Challenges Encountered on the Use of E-Book**

Challenges Of E-Book Use		Freq.	Percentage	Mean	Std. D
High cost	Yes	41	41.0	1.41	.494
	No	59	59.0		

Lack of Internet skill	Yes	22	22.0	1.24	.452
	No	78	78.0		
Unaware of where to locate needed e-book	Yes	65	65.0	1.68	.530
	No	35	35.0		
Downloading of PDF files takes time	Yes	37	37.0	1.49	.611
	No	57	57.0		
Inactive/dead link	Yes	86	86.0	1.86	.349
	No	14	14.0		
Irregular power supply	Yes	39	39.0	1.61	.490
	No	61	61.0		
Poor Internet connection	Yes	100	100.0	2.00	.000
	No	Nil	Nil		

Table 5 shows the rating of the items on the challenges encountered on the use of e-book by students as follows; “Poor Internet connection” (2.00) was ranked highest in the mean score rating and was followed by “Inactive/dead link” with mean score of (1.86); Unaware of where to locate needed information (1.68), “Irregular power supply” (1.61), “Downloading of PDF files takes time” (1.49), “High cost” (1.41), and lastly “Lack of Internet skill” (1.24).

### **Discussion of Findings**

The study shows that most of the respondents are partially aware of the availability of e-book in their area of specialization, dedicated e-book reader devices (e.g. Kindle, Sony reader) and e-book open access sites. The findings also indicated that they are not aware on the how to access e-books in the library webpage. The study reveals that 51% of the undergraduate do not use e-book from the university’s library webpage, as long as they could get the desired books from the university library. The study supports the findings of Rabi, Ojukwu and Oladele (2016) that e-books

penetration in libraries is still very low. Based on the purpose of use. The findings revealed that the respondents use e-books for project/research work, term paper, course assignment, learning more about a subject and for seminar presentation. The study revealed that most of the respondents preferred PDF as a convenient format to use e-book. This is in line with the study of Cumaoglu, Sacici & Torun (2013) that e-book format which is most commonly preferred among students is Portable Document Format (pdf). The challenges encountered by the respondents in the access of e-books are inactive/dead link, unaware of where to locate needed e-book and poor Internet connection. Also the study supports the finding of Ukonu, Wogu and Obayi (2012) that considers low network, difficulty encountered in the process of accessing e-books due to lack of subscription, coupled with inability to secure access to online books as part of the challenges militating against the use of the digital library by degree students of UNN.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Electronic books are vital information resources that is germane to quality education; therefore, provides students with the easy and quick access to intellectual output. The advent of e-book is essential to the demand of the Net generation students, thereby bridging the gap of limited access and unavailability of resources in the library. Therein, findings of the study revealed that, there is still low awareness of e-book use among students in academic institutions in Nigeria which has invariably lead to poor use of e-books. The study therefore, recommends that university libraries as a matter of necessity, should at intervals sensitize and equip students with the knowledge and skills to access and use e-books. They should also provide effective Wi-Fi platform to enable students have access to Internet.

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