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# DIFFICULTIES OF ACCESSING ELECTRONIC RESOURCES AMONG POSTGRADUATE LIBRARY USERS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTHEAST NIGERIA

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## Abstract

This paper is an empirical study of difficulties of accessing electronic resources among postgraduate library users in university libraries in South East Nigeria. The study identifies the difficulties of accessing electronic resources by postgraduate library users in university libraries in South East Nigeria. It employed a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was 2509 postgraduate users in the state and federal university libraries under study. A 10% proportionate sampling technique was used to select a sample of 251 user respondents. The survey used questionnaire as instruments of data collection. Data collected were tabulated and analyzed using simple statistics (mean). The result revealed the difficulties the postgraduate library users encounter while accessing electronic resources which include lack of perpetual access, slow internet connectivity, struggle with information overload, irregular power supply, loss of access to the content due to cancellation of subscription, non -availability of e-resources relevant to my information needs and e-resources are too complicated to use. The study revealed seven difficulties experienced by postgraduate library users while using e-resources in university libraries which had mean values ranging from 2.78 to 3.18 which are all above the cut-off point of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. The overall mean shows that lack of perpetual access to electronic resources (mean = 3.18) is ranked highest, while e-resources are too complicated to use (Mean = 2.78) is ranked lowest as difficulties experienced in using the library's electronic resources. The study recommended that the university libraries in South East Nigeria should have an upward review of the libraries budget on electronic resources which will enhance continuous renewal of electronic subscription and to avert the loss of access to electronic resources; that the upward review of the library budget will enhance improve internet bandwidth for better access to the network and for speedy internet connectivity; that the library should provide an alternative supply of power to support the library in the provision of energy needed for building electronic resources and libraries should indulge in subscription of electronic resources that are relevant to the needs of the library users.

**Keywords:** Electronic Resources; Difficulties; University Libraries; Postgraduate; Users

## **Introduction**

University library is defined by Reitz (2004) as a library or library system established, administered, and funded by a university to meet the information, research, and curriculum needs of its students, faculty, and staff. University libraries are the focal point of interest in all institutions of learning across the globe without which the institutions will not stand. University libraries are built to complement mainstream academic exercise and extra curricula activities of the university which include teaching, research and publications, conservation of knowledge and ideas and extension services. They direct their activities towards the actualization of these objectives. One of such activities is the acquisition of information resources.

University library acquires collections in broad terms of quantity and quality in the form of prints and electronic to support the teaching, learning, research and recreational purposes, (Weber and Flatley 2008). These resources include books, journals, abstracts, audio and video CDs and other electronic resources such as databases, online databases, web resources, e-journal, e-books which have been introduced by the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). University libraries as service organizations, exist to achieve the objectives of their parent institutions that established them. These objectives can only be achieved through effective provision of information to the right person (library user) at the right time.

The university library users include the staff and students of the university-the undergraduate students of both regular, part time and the postgraduate students and other users from outside of the university community who have the permit to access the university library resources. According to Song and Song (2017), postgraduate students are students who are formally engaged in pursuing a course of study in a university with the aim of obtaining a postgraduate diploma, master's degree or Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D). Postgraduate students'

form a significant group of researchers in a university as they rely so much on electronic resources for their research.

With the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), electronic resources that can be accessed by university libraries are of different types and formats. They come in the form of digital which can only be accessed with the use of internet aided by computer and made available to the library. The rapid growth of (ICT) has given rise to the evolution of several new terms like paperless society, e-resources, digital library. Words like digital content, electronic library containing e-journals, e-books, journal consortiums, open access, digital library, Digital Rights Management (DRM) all have become simply buzzwords along with the traditional analog or print resources in the present library system (Chaudhuri, 2012). Mansur (2012) reiterated that electronic resources are pertinent because of their easy usability, readability, budgetary aspects, speedy accessibility and easy back file access. Furthermore, electronic resources have become very important these days as they are up-to-date, multi- dimensional and directional in nature and also can be accessed as well as used anywhere, crossing all geographical boundaries. Such resources add value to all spheres of human activities.

Notwithstanding the numerous benefits of using electronic resources, its access poses some difficulties especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Postgraduate library users find it difficult to access these electronic resources especially with the poor communication and inadequate computerization experienced by some University libraries. Yacob in Obidike and Mole (2015) revealed that inadequate computerization, inadequate infrastructure, and inadequate human capacity were some of the major challenges towards the use of ICT in an educational institution in Botswana. In Nigeria, with the poor technological development and apathy on library development, university libraries are faced with a lot of challenges in building their

collection with electronic resources. Therefore, the present study attempts to examine the difficulties the postgraduate library users face in accessing electronic resources in university libraries in South East Nigeria.

### **Objective of the study**

The study identifies the difficulties of accessing electronic resources by postgraduate library users in university libraries in South East Nigeria.

### **Research Question**

What are the difficulties of accessing electronic resources by postgraduate library users in university libraries in South East Nigeria?

### **Statement of Problems**

With the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), university libraries have strived to improve their collection with electronic resources. This is aimed at meeting the needs of the library users especially the postgraduate users who form the significant users of the electronic resources to enhance their research. Electronic resources are acquired by the university libraries to augment the prints so as to further the goals of its parent organization. Electronic resources are attracting users' attention due to the recency of resources especially in today's network environment. This changing scenario in information environment has laid to increased information needs of the library users with adequate access to electronic resources in addition to the traditional print resources. Irrespective of the numerous gains of electronic resources in research, its access poses some difficulties to the users especially postgraduate users who use electronic resources for their research. This difficulty is observed in the area of providing full text access to scholarly publications in electronic versions. The present research, therefore tries

to expose the difficulties the postgraduate library users face while accessing electronic resources in university libraries in Southeast Nigeria.

## **Literature Review**

### **Electronic Resources**

Electronic resources are concepts which evolved as a result of the rapid growth of information and communication technology. It has been described by different authors in different ways. Shukla and Mishra (2011) described electronic collection as the collection of information which can be accessed only by the use of electronic gadgets. International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) (2012) described electronic resources as those materials that require computer access, whether through a personal computer, mainframe, or handheld mobile devices. They may be accessed remotely via the internet or locally.

Similarly, Mansur (2012) described electronic resources as electronic products that deliver a collection of data, be it text referring to full text databases, e-journals, e-books, image collections, other multimedia products and numerical, graphical or time based, as commercially available title that has been published with a sole aim of being marketed and for information dissemination. These may be delivered on any optical media or via the Internet. Graham (2003) sees electronic resources as the mines of information that are explored through modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT) devices, refined and redesigned and more often stored in the cyber space in the most concrete and compact form and can be accessed simultaneously from infinite points by a great number of audience. The phrase electronic resources has broadly been defined as, information accessed by a computer, may be useful as bibliographic guides to potential sources but, as of yet, they infrequently appear as cited

references in their own right. E-resources, therefore, refer to that kind of documents in digital formats which are made available to library users through a computer based information retrieval system.

In describing the concept of electronic resources, Bavakenthy, Veeran and Salih (2003) viewed electronic resources as resources in which information are stored electronically and are accessible through electronic systems and networks. 'E-resource' is a broad term that includes a variety of publishing models, including Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs), CD-ROMs, online databases, e-journals, e-books, internet resources, Print-on-demand (POD), e-mail publishing, wireless publishing, electronic link and web publishing, etc. In this context, the term primarily denotes "any electronic product that delivers collection of data be it in text, numerical, graphical, or time based, as a commercially available resource". According to Tsakonas and Papatheodorou (2006) electronic information resources are information resources provided in electronic form, and these include resources available on the Internet such as e-books, e-journals, online database, Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD-ROM) databases and other computer-based electronic networks, among others.

In addition, Reitz (2004) defined electronic resource as "material consisting of data and/or computer program (s) encoded for reading and manipulation by a computer, by the use of a peripheral device directly connected to the computer, such as a Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD-ROM) drive, or remotely via a network, such as the Internet." According to her the category includes software applications, electronic texts, bibliographic databases, institutional repositories, websites, e-books, collections of e-journals, etc. Electronic resources not publicly available free of charge usually require licensing and authentication.

According to California State University (CSU), (2005) electronic resources encompasses both full text and abstract/citation; e-journals, both individual and collections; e-books; e-article delivery services etc. It can be accessed remotely via the World Wide Web or delivered locally. In a related development, Ekwelem, Okafor and Ukwoma (2009) defined electronic resources as information resources that are available and can be accessed electronically through such computer networked facilities as online library catalogues, the Internet and the World Wide Web, digital libraries and archives, government portals and websites, CD-ROM databases, online academic databases, such as Medline or Commercial databases such as LexisNexis.

### **Difficulties experienced by postgraduate students in accessing electronic resources**

The challenges of electronic resources collection and management in libraries are the problem of user training, technological up-grading, financial constraint, IT skill manpower, perishable citation: online, if website changes, Universal Resource Locators (URLs) citations disappear, authentication, etc. (Behera & Singh 2011, Balangue 2012). Similarly Dhanavandra & Tamizhchelvan (2012), observed insufficient bandwidth which usually leads to network fluctuation and sometimes slow speed in the process of downloading resources. Also Chisenga (2004) reported that lack of funds, lack of qualified ICT personnel, erratic power supply led to the non-availability and under-use of ICT facilities resulting in low ECD standard.

There is lack of perpetual access to e-resources. A majority of e-resources is licensed for a limited time reiterated Yu and Breivold (2008). Thus, at the end of the license period, if the selector decides to cancel the subscription, it results in a loss of access to the content. It is critical to check access to the resource on regular basis and follow up with the provider in the case of loss of access, which requires special staff having technical skills and knowledge.

In addition, Abbey (2001) reiterated that the greatest problem in acquiring proprietary electronic resources is that libraries seldom if ever acquire them outright. Rather, they enter into licensing agreements that grant term-limited access to them. He further revealed that given the high prices of many of these sources, librarians must spend increasing amounts of time on the economics of acquisition and licensing rather than on content issues. Another problem observed by Abbey (2001) is difficulty involved in the track of the use of e-resources to determine their value for current patrons. Because libraries do not archive electronic resources, only current users can be considered. One does not consider the future research value of e-journals in the same manner as one considers that of print serials.

### **Research Method**

The study was a descriptive study that examined evaluation practices of government owned university libraries in South East Nigeria established before 2010. These practices included the criteria considered in evaluation of electronic resources in university libraries in the South East Nigeria. The study covered government owned university libraries in Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States. They are University of Nigeria Nsukka, Federal University of Technology Owerri, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umuahia, Enugu State university of Technology, Abia State University, Uturu, Imo State University Owerri, Anambra State University (Chukwuemeka Odimegwu Ojukwu University) and Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki. The study was conducted in four federal government and five state government owned university libraries using questionnaire and structured interview as instruments of data collection.

The respondents were the postgraduate students' users of the libraries under study. The population of this study consists of 2509 postgraduate library users in the state and federal university libraries in South East Nigeria. The sample size of this study consists 224 postgraduate students. A proportionate stratified random sampling technique was used in order to have a sample proportional to the size of the postgraduate library users of the libraries under study for data collection. The sample of the postgraduate library users was obtained using 10% of the population of the registered postgraduate library users in each university library under study. This is in line with the recommendation of Nwana (1981) for a population of a few thousands. All the librarians were used since the number was manageable. The questionnaire items were distributed with the aid of research assistants by visiting the research libraries for the postgraduate students to identify the difficulties encountered by the postgraduate library users in accessing electronic resources. They were collected by the researcher to ensure maximum return and correctness. Data collected were tabulated and analyzed using simple statistics (mean).

## Results and Discussion

What are the difficulties of accessing electronic resources by postgraduate library users in university libraries in South East Nigeria?

**Table 1: Responses on difficulties experienced by users in using the library's electronic resources.**

	Name of institution									Overall
	MOUA	NAU	FUTO	UNN	ABSU	ASU	EBSU	ESUT	IMSU	$\bar{x}$
	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}$	<b>N=224</b>
	<b>N=38</b>	<b>N=43</b>	<b>N=16</b>	<b>N=65</b>	<b>N=16</b>	<b>N=8</b>	<b>N=12</b>	<b>N=17</b>	<b>N=9</b>	
1 Lack of perpetual access to e-resources	3.18	3.16	3.06	3.28	3.31	3.25	3.08	2.76	3.44	3.18
2 Experience slow internet connectivity	3.00	3.21	3.31	3.15	3.25	3.13	3.50	3.18	3.22	3.17
3 Struggle with information overload	2.63	3.09	3.31	3.38	3.19	2.63	3.00	3.24	3.22	3.12
4 Irregular power supply	2.79	3.12	3.06	3.08	3.50	2.88	2.92	2.71	2.56	3.00
5 Loss of access to the content due to cancellation of subscription	2.79	2.98	3.00	3.02	3.38	3.00	3.25	2.88	2.67	2.98
6 Non -availability of e-resources relevant to my information needs	2.58	2.86	2.56	3.35	3.13	2.75	2.83	3.18	2.78	2.97
7 E-resources are too complicated to use	2.84	2.72	3.38	2.51	2.69	3.63	2.83	3.00	2.67	2.78
<b>Grand mean</b>	<b>2.83</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>3.05</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>2.94</b>	<b>3.10</b>	<b>2.99</b>	<b>2.98</b>	<b>3.07</b>

**Keys: SA-Strongly Agree A- Agree D-Disagree SD-Strongly Disagree**

The data presented in table 1 above reveals users feelings on the challenges of using the electronic resources which are directly challenges of electronic resources collection development practices in university libraries in South East Nigeria. The data revealed that, the mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on the seven (7) identified items of difficulties experienced in using the library's e-resources in university libraries had mean values ranging from 2.78 to 3.18 which are all above the cut-off point of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. The above findings indicate that the respondents agreed that all the seven (7) items in the table are difficulties experienced in using the library's electronic resources.

Also, the overall mean shows that lack of perpetual access to electronic resources (mean = 3.18) is ranked highest, while e-resources are too complicated to use (Mean = 2.78) is ranked lowest as difficulties experienced in using the library's electronic resources.

## **Summary of Findings**

### **Difficulties**

The findings of this study on research question one (1) revealed the difficulties encountered by postgraduate library users in accessing electronic resources in University libraries in Southeast Nigeria. They include that lack of perpetual access to e-resources, experience slow internet connectivity, struggle with information overload, irregular power supply, loss of access to the content due to cancellation of subscription, non -availability of e-resources relevant to my information needs and e-resources are too complicated to use

These findings are in agreement with the study carried out by Behera and Singh 2011, Yu and Breivold (2008) on the challenges of electronic resources collection and management in libraries which are the problem of user training, technological up-grading, financial constraint, perishable citation and lack of perpetual access.

The findings on the cost of acquisition is in agreement with the study by Goehner (1992) who compares the costs involved in the acquisition of printed document and their counterpart in electronic format. He says that it costs heavily in the initial stages to install the hardware and software to take full advantage of electronic resources. The findings on cost of acquisition agreed with the works of Mansur (2012) who observed that the developments in the e-resources market and technology are happening so fast, that there is a need for continuous staff training and professional development among librarians and computing specialists.

The finding of this study also supported the works of Mole & Obidike (2016) that revealed inadequate funding for automation which is also at infancy level, poor technical knowhow, lack of higher bandwidth in Internet connectivity and lack of sound administrative policies and guidelines as challenges of electronic resources collection development practices.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Access to electronic resources among the postgraduate library users in South East University libraries has come to stay to augment the print information of the library. It has been revealed from the study that the postgraduate library users are faced with a lot of difficulties accessing the electronic resources in university libraries in South East Nigeria. In the light of the present study, the following recommendations are made for ease access of electronic resources among postgraduate library users in university libraries in South East Nigeria.

- The university libraries in South East Nigeria should have an upward review of the libraries budget on electronic resources which will enhance continuous renewal of electronic subscription and to avert the loss of access to electronic resources.
- This upward review of the library budget will enhance improve internet bandwidth for better access to the network and for speedy internet connectivity.
- The library should provide an alternative supply of power to support the library in the provision of energy needed for building electronic resources.
- Libraries should indulge in subscription of electronic resources that are relevant to the needs of the library users.

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