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## The Importance of Electronic Resources to the Undergraduate students of University of Health and Allied Sciences, in Ho, Ghana.

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# **The Importance of Electronic Resources to the Undergraduate students of University of Health and Allied Sciences, in Ho, Ghana.**

## **Abstract**

The main purpose of a library is to provide quick and comprehensive access to information to its clients by using the best possible tools and techniques available. This study examines the usage of electronic resources by undergraduate students of UHAS, in Ho, Ghana and the perceived impact of the use of electronic resources on their academic work. The study employed a survey research method because of its potential for generalizing findings to a large population, while a questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. Data was collected from 100 students from five schools. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 was used to analyse the data into frequencies and percentages. Findings revealed that participants are aware of the electronic library and its resources, but that they are often unable to find information from it. Students believe the electronic library is important for their academic work, but think that the use thereof is difficult. It is recommended that there should be improved infrastructure facilities for accessing electronic resources in the UHAS library, as well as a budgetary allocation for subscribing to more electronic resources. Users should, however, be consulted before purchasing these resources. Finally, the UHAS Library should organize regular training programmes on how to use the electronic library and its resources.

## **Keywords**

electronic resources, electronic information, access, undergraduate students, University of Health and Allied Sciences.

## **1. Introduction**

Electronic resources consist of e-books, e-Journals, articles, newspaper, thesis, dissertation, databases and CD-ROMs. Electronic resources available in a library play a prominent role in facilitating access to the acquired information to the user in expediency manner. Electronic information resources are resources that users access electronically via a computing network from within or outside of the library (Shim, Eastlick, Lotz, and Warrington (2001). Hawkins and Editor (2003) also define electronic information resources as any work encoded and made available for access through the use of a computer, which includes electronic data available by remote and direct access. Remote access of electronic resources refers to the use of electronic resources via computer networks, whereas direct access (fixed media) of electronic resources refers to the use of electronic resources via carriers (e.g., discs/disks, cassettes, cartridges) designed to be inserted into a computerized device or its auxiliary equipment. Hence for any academic library, irrespective of the size of its collection, to thrive in this information, it must embrace Information Communication Technology to enable it to acquire and manage electronic resources. Electronic information resources have a lot of advantages, some of which include access to information that might be restricted to the user due to geographical location or finances, access to more current information, and provision of extensive links to additional resources of related contents (Dadzie Perpetua 2005).

The main purpose and ultimate goal of a library is to provide quick and comprehensive access to information to its clients by using the best possible tools and techniques available. The impact of Information Technology on the availability and accessibility of electronic information resource is profound. Hence, librarians are encouraged to take advantage of this technology to enhance information delivery (Omosekejimi & Eghworo, 2015). The University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS) library is no exception. Over the last two years, UHAS library has undergone significant transformation by focusing more on organizing electronic information resources for its users. This is a necessary when taking into account the observation made by Rodriguez et al. (2012) that print medium is increasingly giving way to the electronic form of materials. Ani and Ahiauzu (2008) agrees with Sharma when she states that “the transition from print to electronic medium apart from resulting in a growth of electronic.

## **2. Problem statement**

The evolution of the internet has brought about access to electronic resources. Most institutions, including academic institutions, are now acquiring and organizing information electronically. Additionally, most libraries today are hybrid libraries, meaning their resources are in both print and electronic formats. The acquisition and organization of this electronic information comes is expensive, at a time when the cost of running academic institutions are already high. Nevertheless, funds are made available for establishing and maintaining electronic resources in the libraries. The issue at hand is whether the undergraduate students of UHAS are aware of these resources, and, if they are, whether they are using the resources and whether they are satisfied with the resources? Numerous studies, including those by Dadzie (2007), Habiba and Chowdhury (2012); and Akussah, Asante, Adu-Sarkodee, and Practice (2015), have investigated the usage and impact of electronic resources, but there have been none specifically looking at it in the UHAS context. This research sought to find out how the undergraduate students of UHAS find the electronic resources and the effect of the use of these resources on their studies.

## **3. Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to examine the usage of electronic resources by undergraduate students of UHAS, Ho, and the perceived impact of the electronic resources on their academic work.

Some of the specific objectives are to:

1. determine whether students are aware of the electronic resources;
2. determine how important the electronic resources are to students;
3. determine the ease of use of electronic resources; and
4. examine the challenges faced by students while accessing and using the electronic resources in the library

## **4. Methodology**

A questionnaire survey was conducted to assess the importance of the electronic resources acquired and managed by UHAS library. Questionnaires were distributed to 100 students from five schools namely, School of Nursing and Midwifery (SONAM), School of Basic and Biomedical Sciences (SBBS), School of Allied Health Sciences (SAHS), School of Pharmacy

(SOP), and School Public Health (SPH). Closed-ended questions were utilized to collect the required data from the participants. The questionnaire was distributed to students after lectures and the researcher collected the completed questionnaires on the following lecture day. Collected data was processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for interpretation and analysis.

## 5. Findings

*Table 1*

Question	Department	Response		Response	
		Yes	Freq. (%)	No	Freq. (%)
Does your library have electronic library resources?		20	100%	0	0%
	SONAM	19	95%	1	5%
	SBBS	19	95%	1	5%
	SAHS	19	95%	1	5%
	SPH	20	100%	0	0%

The UHAS library provides online resources to its users from the University of Ghana (UG) resources. This is made possible through a consortium agreement between the two universities of whereby UG agrees to provide UHAS access to its online collection, whilst UHAS pays a yearly maintenance fee. The UG-subscribed database is therefore linked to the UHAS library website and materials are made available through the library website to users. It is therefore not surprising that more than 90% of the participants stated that the UHAS library has electronic resources (see Table 1). The students are well aware that the library has electronic resources and that they can use these resources academic work.

Table 2

Question	Department	Response		Response	
		Yes	Freq. (%)	No	Freq. (%)
Do you think it is necessary, important or essential for students to use these resources?	SONAM	18	90%	2	10%
	SBBS	19	95%	1	5%
	SAHS	20	100%	0	0%
	SOP	19	95%	1	5%
	SPH	18	90%	2	10%

The findings show that majority of the student see electronic resources as necessary and essential to their academic work. It is indeed vitally important to their survival as student. Table 2 above shows their responses to the question,

Table 3

Statement	Response	Departments									
		SONAM	%	SBBS	%	SAHS	%	SOP	%	SPH	%
If you have answered Yes to Question 2, what is the material you look for meant for?	Teaching/ research purposes	1	5	0	0	1	5	0	0	1	5
	Learning purposes	9	45	9	45	10	50	14	70	13	65
	Electronic resources for current information	10	50	11	55	9	45	6	30	6	30

Electronic resources can be used for many purposes, including access to current information, research, teaching, and learning. These are then also the main purposes identified by the participants. This confirms what Rehman and Ramzy (2004) found in their study that investigated the awareness and use of electronic information resources among health academics, which show that libraries are extensively used for research needs, preparation of lectures, and for obtaining current knowledge.

Table 4

Statement	Dept.	Response							
		Very hard	%	Somewhat hard	%	Somewhat easy	%	Very easy	%
How would you describe the use of the library's electronic resources?	SONAM	12	<b>60</b>	4	<b>20</b>	2	<b>10</b>	2	<b>10</b>
	SBBS	10	<b>50</b>	5	<b>25</b>	2	<b>10</b>	3	<b>15</b>
	SAHS	10	<b>50</b>	6	<b>30</b>	3	<b>15</b>	1	<b>5</b>
	SOP	12	<b>60</b>	5	<b>25</b>	2	<b>10</b>	1	<b>5</b>
	SPH	10	<b>50</b>	6	<b>30</b>	2	<b>10</b>	2	<b>10</b>

The findings on the ease of use (See Table 4) reveal that the majority of students do not find the use of the electronic library easy. A cursory look at the respondents from all schools shows that 50% and above do not the library user-friendly. 25% and above see the use as somewhat hard, while 5% and above see it user-friendly.

Table 5

Statement	Dept.	Response					
		Always	%	Sometimes	%	Never	%
In using the library's electronic resources, do you find what you are searching for?	SONAM	8	<b>40</b>	10	<b>50</b>	2	<b>10</b>
	SBBS	7	<b>35</b>	12	<b>60</b>	1	<b>5</b>
	SAHS	6	<b>30</b>	11	<b>55</b>	3	<b>15</b>
	SOP	4	<b>20</b>	13	<b>65</b>	3	<b>15</b>
	SPH	3	<b>15</b>	16	<b>80</b>	1	<b>5</b>

The findings in Table 5 confirm the findings on the previous question dealing with the ease of use. It is obvious that students would struggle to find what they are looking for, if they start out by struggling with the use of electronic resources. As many as 80% of students from a single school responded to they only sometimes find what they are searching for. This confirms the need for training on how to use the electronic library.



Table 6

Statement	Department	Response		Response	
		Yes	Freq. (%)	No	Freq. (%)
Do you think you need assistance to locate the resources? (training in information literacy)	SONAM	20	100%	0	0%
	SBBS	18	90%	2	10%
	SAHS	20	100%	0	0%
	SOP	19	95%	1	5%
	SPH	20	100%	0	0%

The findings on the question on whether students need assistance to locate resources from the electronic library, confirm the earlier assertion by the researcher that students need training in using the electronic library. Table 6 shows that 95% and above of the respondents think that they need training on how to use the electronic library to locate resources. This is in line with the assertion of Okello-Obura (2010) that in order for students to utilize the growing range of electronic resources, they have to acquire and practice the skills necessary to exploit these resources.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Several studies have been conducted on the use of electronic resources in the academic world. The findings of the majority of these studies show that electronic resources are useful for academic work, and are particularly beneficial to students, who are enabled to find different resources of information. Research conducted by, amongst others, Day and Bartle (1998) and Okello-Obura and Magara (2008), has found that electronic resources when properly used can have a positive effect on students' academic performance. The researchers in study share this opinion and found several advantages to the use of electronic resources, typical among them are; providing solution to space problem, providing remote access, convenience of use, increased readership with improved services, leading to more opportunities for productive research output and academic excellence within short time. Generally, provision of electronic information

resources in academic libraries has provided unparalleled support to modern teaching, learning and research drives in universities; so much so that electronic resources have become a “go-to” for undergraduate students in terms of access to current and convenient information for their academic work. For this reason, study concludes that it is prudent for academic libraries to prioritize electronic resources as the major information resource and ensure its potential usage. It was found that electronic resources are not utilized to their fullest by undergraduate students of UHAS because of inadequate training, restrictions of access such as passwords and usernames, and other limitations, including poor internet connection, inadequate computers, as well as power outages and inadequate searching skills, which all contributed to students depending more on library professionals for their information searches. These problems have affected the accessibility and utilization of electronic resources in the library. In order to alleviate these challenges and to ensure maximum use of electronic resources, library management should put in place mechanisms to ensure that electronic resources are fully accessed and utilized by users. This can be achieved by putting mechanisms in place to mitigate the identified problems.

This paper confirms that a large number of electronic resources are made available in UHAS Library. However, the majority of users of UHAS library use print resources for their learning purposes. Users are generally satisfied with the presence of the electronic library but are not happy about how user-unfriendly it is. Users are often unable to find the materials that they need. This is due to a lack of skills necessary to access the library for its resources. Users agreed that they need more training programmes to enable them to access and use the electronic resources with ease. Some of the recommendations are:

- improved infrastructure facilities for accessing electronic resources in the UHAS library.
- an available budget for subscribing to more electronic resources; without an adequate budget the library cannot cover all the subjects’ content.
- Regular user surveys, both before and after the electronic resources are subscribed to. The library should also receive information from its users on whether they need to subscribe to a particular electronic resource or not.
- Regular training programmes on how to use the electronic library and its resources.

- Increased Internet connectivity and bandwidth on campus; faster internet access will minimize download time.

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