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# Access to Research Information in Cybercafés: The Challenge to Academic Libraries

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# Access to Research Information in Cybercafés: The Challenge to Academic Libraries

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## Introduction

Information is increasingly becoming a critical determinant of the success of human endeavour. It is crucial to the performance of academics who are both consumers and producers of information. Information and documentation including printed and online materials are the most important means to control and access scientific result. For the academics to have rightful information, the university libraries have a part to play. The vision, mission and strategies which are selected by universities as a guide for meeting the core function of teaching, learning, research and providing information form the foundation on which the role of the university library is established. Based on these functions, Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) emphasised that the primary purpose of university libraries is to support teaching, learning and research in ways consistent with, and supportive of the institution's mission and goals. In other words library resources and services should be sufficient in quality, depth, diversity and currency to support the institution curriculum. In line with this, Aino (2006) opted that university libraries are expected to provide information materials in all kinds of format, providing wider access of information in form of electronic journals, books, full text journals, CD-ROM, databases and internet. Failure to have access to information has numerous consequences like duplication of research work, frustration, low morale and low productivity in research and teaching. This lack of access to information has resulted to academics seeking for information in the cyber-café, which they feel offers similar information access services. In addition Popoola (cited in Oyewusi and Oyeboade, 2009) submits that the inability of university libraries to meet the information requirements of some library users might have force them to use personal collections including internet resources when conducting research. This implies that if the libraries neglect to match library services capabilities to users' needs, then the libraries run the risk of being marginalized and therefore users will seek alternative competitive offerings in order to satisfy their many academic needs. Broadly-Preton and Barnes (2002) was of opinion that the success of organisation depends on ability to respond to the needs of customers more effectively and organisation must avoid complacency at all cost. In order for university libraries to fulfil their objectives, there is need to improve on library services. The paper is then aimed at finding out the extent computer services that are available in the university libraries and the extent university libraries meet researchers' information needs.

## Literature Review

The changes in scholarly communication associated with electronic publishing, however have led to a variety of economic policy and technological issues. The implication is that most scholarly works are created in electronic form and much of the publication process are electronic, regardless of whether the end result is a print or an online publication. Brown (1999) and Cronin (2002) believed that increased use is being made of electronic means of communication facilities such as electronic mail (e-mail), fax, electronic

bulletin boards, computer conferencing, newsgroup and other telecommunication channels. Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) established that researchers prefer internet in Nigeria because internet provides up to date information than the library resources, also retrieval of information is faster and there are various source to consult. They are various form of electronic according to Jirjwong and Wallin (2002), which include; on-line databases, online public access catalogs (OPAC), e-conference, e-mail discussion, full- text databases, books, scholarly websites, pre-print archives and bulletin boards. Some of these sources are available in few university libraries and cyber-café in Nigeria. Oyewusi and Oyeboade also found out electronic data bases, OPAC, close circuit TV (CCTV), e-journal, microfilm and facsimile were not accessible for use in Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Nigeria. They further said that the university has not been able to acquire the electronic resources because of financial constraints.

However the integration of new technology especially computer and internet into the library is a major force change in the nature of librarianship and careers of information professionals Dolon and Schumacher (as cited in Aharony, 2006). The question is to what extent do the university libraries in Nigeria meet research information needs, within this era. The new information environment requires that librarians now have new opportunities and new roles to play. Therefore, for the librarians to adapt to this new role, which requires skills, they require training. Cowgill, Beam and Wess (2001) emphasized that the major issue raised in the implementation of information commons of University of Colorado was staff training modules. Anao (cited in Emojorho and Nwalo, 2009) retreated that librarians must retool and re-strategize, if they fail to do these things they will lose ground, decline in relevance and face the possibility of extinction. This is extremely important to enable librarians to fulfil their duty at this era of information technology. Aharony (2006) emphasized that many studies have found that the status of the librarian is low, even in the information generation. He also went further to say that working within information is not limited to librarians and to the library, there is fear that librarians will be needed less in future. On the other hand, Fleck and Bowden's (as cited in Aharony (2006) found out that library and information science is highly regarded and perceived as service oriented and not as a dynamic or proactive profession. Librarians are regarded as unambitious people who find satisfaction in helping others to fulfil their needs. In line with the of issue of non-proactive by librarians, Omekwu (2007) emphasised that in an environment of change and reform, information professionals should be proactive rather than reactive in library and information delivery. The professional image of the librarians is one of the topics that concern them, which is management of information. Aharony (2006) enumerated the roles of librarians as follows, items that relate to information retrieved, building and managing sites, information filtering, matching processed information to the client's personal profile, instruction in and use of information resources, reference, indexing and classification. These roles are challenges to librarians in the rapidly evolving environment of networked information, information explosion, remote access and fast growing needs to help users to use information effectively. OCLC (as cited in Oyewusi and Oyeboade, 2009) emphasised that study had shown that libraries were seen as been more trustworthy/credible in providing more accurate information. World Book Encyclopaedia (2005) emphasised the concern over the internet about the accuracy and the appropriateness of the materials available in internet which may be misleading inaccurate or even fraudulent. To coped with information explosion, complexities in information packaging and access, unfiltered information, Adeogun (2006) suggested the need to develop a stronger intellectual framework for using information effectively to make the library user heavily dependent on the skilled assistance of information professionals in their search for relevant information seeking. For the academics to accomplish their duty in teaching and research, the librarians need to collaborate with teaching staff in incorporating electronic resources, internet and other resources in the library. Okafor and Ukwoma (2007) found out that academics in science and engineering in Southern Nigeria do not frequently use current awareness services, consultation with librarians and exhibitions as means of gaining required information in the library. This aspect of library services is essential for the users. Emojorho and Nwalo (2009) emphasised that collection management is much more than collection building; it entails the use, storage and organisation of collection and making it accessible to users. Adeogun (2006), was of the opinion that the value of information service in the present information dispensation is not possessing information but in providing access to it, and more importantly in developing the organisational and technological capabilities in the end-user to be able to identify, access, sift and determine the authenticity and validity of information.

Morgan (as cited in Broadly-Preston and Barno, 2002) observes that there are many more people and institutions providing information services today. We have to do more to improve our services and convince people that they should use libraries instead of other information providers. Shefique (2009) expressed the idea that library services must be based on the modern concept of marketing to achieve readers' satisfaction and to nurture a culture of customer service to enhance the library's image in the eyes of the users. This can be done by introducing library liaison, Corral (2004) suggested that the library liaison should now include provision and accessing electronic databases and journals, finding high quality

resources on the web, keeping up the data with new information, using bibliographic software packages, carrying citation and advanced database searches and searching for systematic reviews. This requires training of the users. Olumide, (2007) recommended that in order to make library more vibrant and more accessible to users, it requires periodic users education/training on the use of internet and information technology. This could be in form of seminars or conferences, with the aim of alerting the users of findings emanating from a research project. In view of these, Adebayo (2009) was of opinion that more dynamic, challenging and practical user-friendly services such as current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, literature searching, indexing and abstracting and functional ICT services should be given priority. This is necessary because Document of University of Chicago (2007) library explained that traditional library access refers to policies defining what individuals or groups have, physical access to a library collection and what services are available to them, but as more and more library and information resources become available on the internet, libraries have expanded these policies to incorporate virtual as well as physical access. Therefore the librarians have to get themselves equipped with what it takes to have a virtual library.

Studies have shown various rates of main sources of academics in publishing. Shohan (1998) found that 92% of faculty members in two Israeli academic universities used professional journals in their recent research, followed by 85.7% using monographs. She went further to express that in detail 85.7% of engineers used monographs and 92.9% used periodicals while 78.5% of lecturers in science make use of monographs and 94.9% used periodicals and 38% used computerized databases. Brown (1999) investigated how the scientists keep abreast with current developments in their field, 85% of the chemists indicated that they scan current issues of journals to stay current in their field and 91% of Mathematicians also scan current journals to stay current in their field. In the same manner, Lumand and Mutshewa (1999) discovered that University of Botswana, Faculty of Science academics also used professional journals mainly as their source of information have 70.4% of usage while textbooks have 64.8% usage and online database (internet) 42.6%. Emojorho and Nwalo found out that users responses on effectiveness of ICTs on collection management for university libraries in Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria was 40% low effect, followed by 30% no effect while special libraries showed that nearly 80% indicated low or no effect.

For countries that are advanced in information technology to rate high use of professional journals showed that there are specific information that are contained in journals that are not free information one can easily access in internet in cyber café. Internet is used for various purposes like faxing letters, e-mail etc, but when it comes to the academic work of research and publishing, the required information is in the core journals. The information should be available in the university library either in printed copy or on-line e-journals. Parameshwar and Patil (2009) found that at Gulbarga University that majority of the faculty members and research scholars, up to 63.5% reported they accessed the internet through their central library. The respondents also commented that the digital learning resource centre and digital library (central library) was the most comfortable place for accessing the internet. The question is, are the information available and do the academics have access to the information in Nigeria university libraries? The required information may not be fully available in the university libraries in Nigeria. Ehikhamenor (1993) was of the view that the solution to the developmental problems of the third world lies in information management. The information management could also be used to improve library use by applying other library services. Shafique (2009) found that the new library services that can enhance the access to library resources were, open access to the library collections, SDI in relevant research areas, effective reference services/personalised reference service, current awareness service, library orientation, help in online searching, document delivery, Blog development, e-mail alerts, photocopying and interlibrary loan. All these library services are means of meeting the library users at their needs. Gronroos (as cited in Broady-Preton and Barnes, 2002) emphasised that the new paradigm of customer relationship management is now coming to the fore base of creating value interactions between supplier and the customer, with cooperation being required to creating the value the customer seeks. This concept of cooperation with customers and treating each one as individual is relevance to the librarians in this task of new era of library management.

## Methodology

Descriptive survey method was used for the study. The study was conducted in southern Nigeria. Southern Nigeria is made up of three geo-political zones of south-east, south-south and south-west. There are 13 federal universities in southern Nigeria out of which 6 universities were selected for the study, two universities from each zone. The population of the study was made of academics in science and engineering. The total of 435 academics in the rank of professors, readers, senior lecturers, lecturers 1 and 11 were used for the study. There was a response rate of 67% with 291 questionnaire returned and

properly completed. Four research questions were used for the study and they were analysed using percentages and bar chart.

## Findings

Table 1 below shows the extent of computer services in the university libraries used for the study.

Table 1: Extent of computer services in the university library

Name of university	Very often		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
UNIBADAN	18	36.7	23	46.9	5	10.2	-	-	3	6.1
UNN	16	11.9	14	16.7	17	20.2	16	19.0	27	32.2
UNIBEN	11	20.8	15	28.3	10	18.9	5	9.4	12	22.6
NAU	14	48.3	7	24.1	2	6.9	4	13.8	2	6.9
UNAAB	12	42.9	9	32.1	6	21.4	1	3.6	-	-
UNIUYO	6	12.5	15	31.3	9	18.8	3	6.3	15	31.3

Data in Table 1 above shows that respondents from University of Ibadan, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Indicated they often have computer services in their university libraries with the following percentages 83.6%, 75.0% and 72.4% respectively. On the other hand, respondents from University of Uyo, Uyo, University of Benin and University of Nigeria, Nsukka indicated that they do not often have computer services in their university libraries as follows 49.1%, 43.8% and 28.6% respectively. This shows that University of Ibadan has more computer information services than other universities while University of Nigeria, Nsukka has the least of computer services available. Since the computer services were not often available in some of the university libraries, what then is the extent of Internet utilisation of the academics?

Table 2: Extent of Internet use according to university

Name of university	Very much		Much		Somewhat		Little		Not at all	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
UNIBADAN	34	69.4	15	30.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
UNN	45	53.6	24	28.6	9	10.7	4	4.8	2	2.4
UNIBEN	32	60.4	14	26.4	5	9.4	1	1.9	1	1.9
NAU	12	41.4	11	37.9	2	6.9	3	10.3	1	3.4
UNAAB	16	57.1	7	32.1	2	7.1	0	0	1	3.6
UNIUYO	22	45.8	18	37.5	5	10.4	0	0	3	6.3
TOTAL	161	55.3	91	31.3	23	7.9	8	2.7	7	2.8

The data on Table 2 showed that academics in University of Ibadan utilize the Internet very much with 69.4% while the other five universities had very much use of the Internet as follows; University of Benin 60.4%, University of Agriculture Abeokuta 57.1%, University of Nigeria, Nsukka 53.6%, University of Uyo 45.8%, and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka 41.4% for their research information needs. The grand total shows that 86.6% of the academics frequently make use of the internet. Since the universities utilize the Internet much, it is then necessary to find out whether the university libraries meet the academics information needs.

Table 3: Extent university library meets information needs according to university.

Name of university	Very Frequently		Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
UNIBADAN	-	-	16	32.7	28	57.1	4	8.2	1	2.0
UNN	-	-	13	15.5	44	52.4	23	27.4	4	4.8

UNIBEN	1	1.9	13	24.5	23	43.4	10	18.9	6	11.3
NAU	1	3.4	6	20.7	16	55.2	4	13.8	2	6.9
UNAAB	4	14.3	5	17.9	11	39.3	6	21.4	2	7.2
UNIUYO	4	8.3	15	31.3	12	25.0	11	22.9	6	12.5
TOTAL	10	3.4	68	23.4	134	46.0	58	19.9	21	7.3

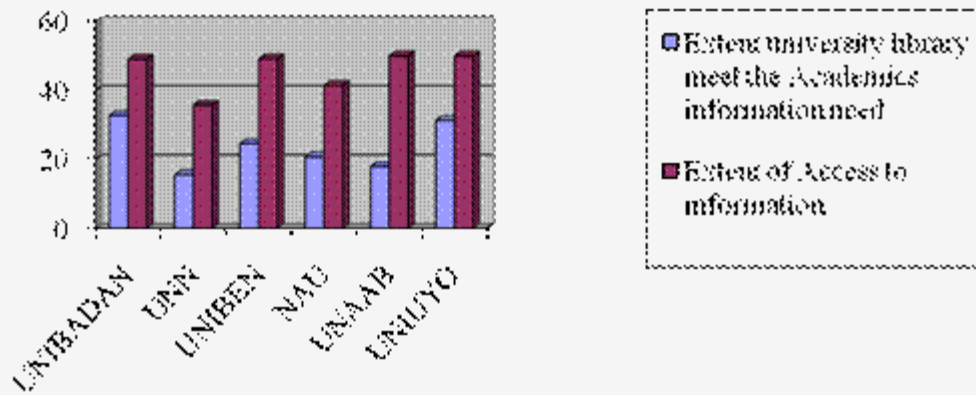
Data on Table 3 above shows that university libraries do not frequently meet the information needs of the academics as follows: Universities of Ibadan (32.7%), Uyo (31.3%), Benin (24.5%), Nnamdi Azikiwe (20.7%), Agriculture, Abeokute (17.9%) and Nigeria, Nsukka (15.5%). The six university libraries do not often meet the information needs of the academics. Libraries of University of Ibadan, Nnamdi Azikiwe University and University of Nigeria, Nsukka sometimes meet the information needs of their academics as follows while libraries of University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, University of Benin and University of Uyo rarely meet the information needs of the academics as indicated by the respondents. Since the university libraries do not often meet the information needs of academics, the fourth question was imposed. To what extent do academics in science and engineering have access to the information used for their research? The data to this question is presented on Table 4 below.

Table 4: University and extent of access to Information

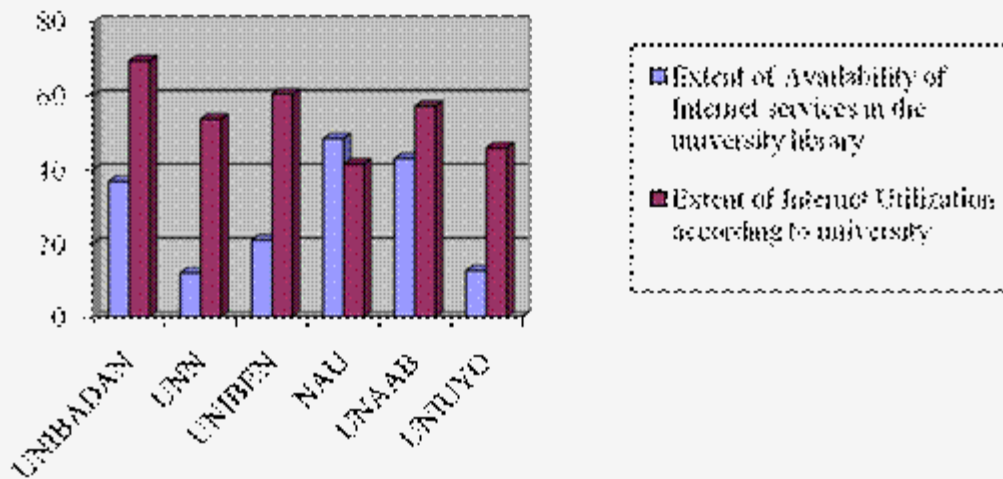
Name of university	Very frequently		Frequently		Sometimes		Rarely		Never	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
UNIBADAN	11	22.4	24	49.0	14	28.6	-	-	-	-
UNN	21	25.0	30	35.7	29	34.5	4	4.8	-	-
UNIBEN	11	20.8	26	49.1	14	36.4	1	1.9	1	1.9
NAU	4	13.8	12	41.4	9	31.0	3	10.3	1	3.4
UNAAB	9	32.1	14	50.0	1	3.6	2	7.1	2	7.1
UNIUYO	8	16.7	24	50.0	16	33.3	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	64	22.0	130	44.7	83	28.5	0	3.4	4	4.8

Table 4 above shows that academics in Universities of Ibadan, Uyo, Benin and Agriculture. Abeokuta indicated higher access to information when very frequently and frequent access were join together as follows, 71.4%, 66.7%, 69.9% and 82.1% respectively while Universities of Nigeria, Nsukka and Nnamdi Azikiwe have least access to information as 60.7% and 55.2% respectively. This shows that University of Agriculture, Abeokuta had the highest access to information while Nnamdi Azikiwe University had the least access to information. The extent the University libraries meet the academics information needs and the extent of access to information is illustrated using the bar chart in fig 1 and extent of internet availability in the university library and internet utilization by the academics also in Fig 2 below.

**Fig 1: Percentage of Frequent Access to Information and Extent University Libraries meet users information needs**



**Fig 2: Extent of percentage of internet utilization and availability of internet in the university library**



## Discussion

The findings revealed that university libraries of the six universities do not frequently meet the academics information needs. This may be due to lack of current printed library resources especially the professional journals or due to lack of computer services including internet or inability of the librarians to provide the required information. Studies have shown that academics make use of professional journals frequently. Shoham (1998) found that 92% of faculty members in two Israeli academic universities used professional journals in their research. It is the same with Nigeria academics, however Okafor and Ukwuoma (2007) discovered that though the academics use professional journals frequently, but current journals were not always available in the university libraries. The question then is the computer services available in the university libraries. Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) in their study found out that electronic and internet facilities were not available in some Nigerian university libraries. The study revealed that 3 out of 6 universities had computer information services frequently available in their university libraries. The study also revealed that these university libraries could not frequently meet the researchers' information

needs. In spite of the availability of internet in some of the university libraries none of them could frequently meet the researchers' information needs. This shows that the problem to some extent is with the librarians and the library staff, this is illustrated in Fig 1 above. This shows that according Anao (cited in Emojorho and Nwalo, 2009) librarians must retool and re-strategize themselves to face the challenges of information technology. In addition, acquiring information resources is not the only issue, Emojorho and Nwalo reiterated that collection management is much more than acquisition of library resources; it entails the use, storage and organisation of collection and making it accessible to users. On the other hand, the findings revealed that the academics make much use of internet with 86.6% average and have much access to information. Some of the Universities that indicated non-availability of computer services in their university libraries indicated high use of internet services as seen in Fig 2 above while those who have computer services in their libraries revealed that their libraries sometimes meet their information needs. The implication is that since all the academics had much access to information through the internet, it means that they access the internet outside the library and probably in the cyber café since not many offices and homes had internet facilities. The use of internet outside the library as only source of information has implications for the academics and librarians. Parameshwar and Patil (2009) reported that 63.5% used their university library for internet search because it was the most comfortable place for them. Considering this issue of use of library, Shefigue expressed that library services must now be based on the modern concept of marketing to achieve readers' satisfaction, and to nurture of culture of customer service to enhance the library's image in the eyes of the users. This is not in line with Lumande and Mutshewa (1999) who found out that, lecturers in the Faculty of science in University of Botswana had only 42.6 % usage of online database. Studies have shown that academics use technical journals as the main sources of their information for research. It means that the frequent use of internet sources may be due to the fact that most of the academic libraries used for study do not have current professional journals. Therefore for the academics to keep abreast of current trends in their fields they resorted to the use of internet. This led them to indicate that they have frequent access to information. It is an established fact that it is difficult to get core journals in different profession of science and engineering in the internet without subscription. Apart from this, there are other problems in using the internet without direction. Burke (1999) enumerating the problems as frustration in finding the exact information, sources in the net are not organized, it is difficult to choose the best source when there are many of them, some information in the net are biased, some are simply incorrect or incomplete. Added to this, World Book Encyclopaedia (2005) emphasised that among the concerns over use of internet are doubts about the accuracy and appropriateness of the material available in the net, that information posted on the internet may be misleading, inaccurate or even fraudulent. It then means that to get required information for research in the net, it requires professional information retrieval experts to avoid waste of time. This is supported by OCLC (as cited in Oyewusi and Oyeboade, 2009) that libraries are seen as been more trustworthy and credible in providing more accurate information.

Academics that have computer services in their library, scored low in the way university libraries provide the information needs and high in the way they get access to information through the internet outside the university libraries. This is due to the fact that according to Oyewusi and Oyeboade (2009) researchers prefer internet because of internet provides up to date information and it is faster and there are various sources to consult. On the other hand Aharony (2006) found out that librarians are low in information generation. He enumerated the roles of the librarians as follows: information retrievals, building and managing sites, information filtering, matching processed information to the client's personal profile, instruction and use of information resources. This implies that librarians have a lot to do to improve in their services to users and make the necessary information delivery. This is supported by Adebayo (2009) emphasised that librarians should be involved in practical user-friendly services such current awareness services, selective dissemination of information and ICT services should be given priority. In the same line Shafique (2009) added services like personalised reference service, blog development, e-mail alerts and help in online searching could help. This requires according to Adeogun (2006), the need to develop a stronger intellectual framework for using information effectively and making the library users heavily dependent on the skilled assistance of information professional. It also requires that librarians have to improve on their personality, willingness and methods of information delivery as emphasised by Aharony (2006) and Omekwu (2007) that in an environment of change and reform, information professionals should be proactive in information delivery. It is necessary that librarians improve our library services to ensure survival and prosperity in a dynamic environment categorized by increased competition.

## The Way Forward

For the librarians to fulfil their objectives in helping the universities in fulfilling the major objectives in teaching, learning and research the following points should be considered:



## Training of Librarians and Library Staff

Training librarians on all aspect of ICT should be emphasised because we cannot give what we do not know or understand, we need to update our information in customer services. We need also to be current in the information we render. That will lead us to know ways and means of access to information and then be able to explain that to our customers. The complexity of global information sources, the rapid change of information and impact of ICT's on its access has magnified the need for information coordination by well qualified and skilled library and information personnel for the benefit of university customers. Information professionals, must equip themselves with a high level of technological skills for access and manipulating information. They should know how to use search engines and database in different subject areas and this will help in assisting the users.

## Human Relationships

This implies that we treat the clients courteously with respect, the way to maintain a good service is to take interest in our job. Also interacting with academics to know their needs and communicate information for development in real time without barriers. Our personal appearance, the way we behave, smile, how services are rendered reflects the image of the library. User care should be at the centre of the mission's strategic policies for us to succeed and fulfil the major aim by which the library was established

## Training of Users

This could begin with library orientation to the library users to help them adapt to different library services and library equipment. This will help the users on how, where and when to look for information, a guidelines like this will help them not only how to use the library but on how to scout out for information for their research. This will also enhance maximum use of different library services available. User education could be done through library instruction, workshop, seminar and computer aided instruction. This will enable the librarians to explain to the library client how to get access to the required information, either through internet in the library or having access to the library database and other sources. Training the users will involve user sensitisation to respect, make appropriate use and safe guard the library materials and equipment

## Improve Library Organisation and Management

The library management should analyse the organization's set objectives, decide on strategies and formulate tactics. The management in other to achieve the stated objectives has to manage the human resources very well considering who knows the service and client better. Some of the services could be improved on, like current awareness services, which help to inform the users of required information that is newly available. The management also should get the authority to see the need of internet facilities and database in the library for the university libraries that do not have already. As most library services involve blended information delivery which includes physical materials and electronic services, the management should make sure that the users know their website. The library management should also subscribe to some the core e-journals and printed journals in different disciplines, this will attract academics into university libraries.

## Marketing

Marketing of information materials and services is a management process, which identifies, anticipates and supplies users requirements efficiently through response to user priorities. The concern is how information might be customised, packed and delivered to the users through different library services. This will involve making the users aware of what is in the library, this may lead into changing users perception or actually encouraging the users to make use of the library resources. This will involve creating awareness to attract attention through telephone calls, in house bulletins, local newspaper, etc. Other marketing strategy includes exhibitions, posters, in-house journals and newsletters, displays and talks. It can involve librarians going out to present their specialisation to the library users

## Establishment of Library Liaison

Library liaison is not common in university libraries in Nigeria. It is a librarian appointed by the library management to liaise with academic department or faculty, for better information searching and delivery. Usually the librarians are assigned to area of his specialization. It is assumed that library liaison should be accept in finding quality resources on the web and carry out citation and advanced database searches. This will bring about cooperation and collaboration with departments and academic staff. It will lead to librarian acting like counsellors, advisers and teachers.

## Conclusion

There is no doubt that for the academics to fulfil fully the duty of research, publication and impacting knowledge, they need information supplied from authenticated sources. The need for university libraries to achieve its expected functions of acquiring; processing and disseminating information should be of paramount importance. Availability is one thing but most importantly making the information accessible to the library uses is another. Our organisations success is dependent upon our ability to satisfy our clients repeated needs through improved organisation and management of our resources and good relationship. This could be enhanced through training of librarians, staff and users, through applying practical friendly orientated services and also marketing the library resources and services. These will simultaneously create in the minds of our clients a perception of quality value and superiority over our competitors. It will attract new users who hope to get better things for their research.

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