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Perceptions of Pakistani Users about Library Service Quality: LibQUAL Comments

Shafiq Ur Rehman

University of the Punjab, s_rehman25@hotmail.com

Widad Mustafa El Hadi

Université Charles-de-Gaulle, Lille 3, France

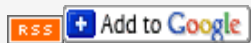
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Use of Library Information Technology Resources by Graduate Students of University of Agriculture, Abeokuta

[Nurudeen Adeniyi Aderibigbe](#)

[Sunday Oluwafemi Emmanuel](#)

Nimbe Adedipe Library
University of Agriculture
Abeokuta, Ogun State, Nigeria

Introduction

The adoption of information technology into academic libraries has revolutionized the way they acquire, store, and disseminate information to their users and way the individual patrons require and use information. Consequently, user's demand, information need and searching skills have changed (Chizenga,1998; Oketunji,2000). Henderson(1992)opines that the influence of IT in library functions and services has led to emergence of virtual library and e-library, which are terms used to refer to libraries that have adopted Information Technology to execute their functions and services. It is important to note according to Covi and Kling (1995) that a local collection of computer or other networks, software and technical staff do not constitute a digital library. They only provide basis for searching,, reading,, possibly printing and using documents that are stored in digital form elsewhere.

Several academic publications in the recent time have focus on digital, electronic or virtual library in various forms and formats. Digital libraries are being explained from two perspectives i.e. based on resources available via the internet and based on library automation. Information scientists often identify digital or electronic libraries with collection of whole texts, documents and images that are available via the internet services, such as TTP, gopher and World Wide Web (www). This group of electronic documents abounds and they include some standard versions of classical articles, technical reports, published papers, government documents, electronic journals and books.

Library automation on the other hand includes those services of library that can be computerized such as online catalogs, searchable collections (Medline, current contents, LISA online etc) abstracting services (Chemical Abstracts, Social Science Citation Abstracts, INSPEC etc) and agglomeration that offer whole text (Dialog, Lexis-Nexis etc). Buckland (1993) refers to this latter perspective as automated library services. These services are offered independently of the internet, although

they are sometimes available through it and are usually purchased by university libraries.

Furthermore, Halman (1995) notes that the contribution that the proliferation of the networked information system has made to the transformation of the academic librarianship functions and services are now being expected in very swift and diversified ways. Many graduate students today are better equipped to use information technology from the onset to overcome obstacles in retrieving and managing the growing amount of online and offline information that are now available. Moreover, the growth in electronic publishing creates a need for new skills by users in searching full text, and in some cases multimedia and hypermedia electronic resources. Going by all these, one can aver that successful utilization of library IT resources rests squarely on training of users and availability of necessary infrastructures. Drake (2005) states that end users trained in the use of computers and the surfing of internet can search, retrieve and manipulate information electronically.

However, a question that readily comes to mind is what is the extent and pattern of usage of IT resource in academic libraries by users of the parent institution; such as: academic staff, other staff of the institution, students (undergraduates and postgraduates), other members of the institution and their immediate community. This study therefore focuses on the pattern of usage of library information technology resources by graduate students of University of Agriculture Abeokuta in Ogun State of Nigeria. The study will attempt to find out the level of awareness of library IT resources by the graduate students; the extent to which they use the resources, and their preference among available resources.

Statement of the Problem

In order to effectively satisfy the information needs of graduate students, libraries need to determine these needs in various courses. Also, they need to find out the extent of their information retrieval, knowledge organization, information use, and information searching skills. These will help in designing effective user education programme and services. This study will explore the extent to which the above two issues are met by university library/.

Also, majority of the studies in the past had focused on information use and needs of different categories of professional, academics, and researchers. While the pattern of usage of library-base IT has been left out. This study will therefore investigate the patterns of usage of Library Information Technology based resources by graduate students of the University of Agriculture, Abeokuta.

User study have been used to reveal the pictures of what libraries should and could be to achieve best information systems that will provide maximum support by meeting the needs of the majority of users. Besides, information needs of graduate students are dynamic, services for them should be proactive and directed towards meeting these changing information needs; thus, libraries, like other service-oriented organizations needs to develop effective mechanism to receive regular feedback from patrons and users. Also, the result(s) of this study would eradicate the problems of intractability of data and idiosyncractic methods of organizing and retrieving information in order to promote the availability of adequate and up-to-date information in research environment. Consequently, the necessity to anticipate, identify, and describe the usage pattern of graduate students of University of Agriculture Abeokuta and matching the available IT resources in Nimbe Adedipe library of the institution cannot be ignored, else, scarce resources will be wasted, informed decision would be deluged and irrational alternatives would be chosen. The costs were enormously critical. Understanding people deserves as much thought and effort as collection and organization of information,

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of this study, attempt will be made to provide answers to the following, via the data gathered.

- (1) To what extent are the respondents aware of the various categories of library-based Information Technology resources in the library?
- (2) To what extent is the library information technology resources used by the graduate students?
- (3) For what purpose do they use the library I T resources for?
- (4) Which of the technologies do the respondents prefer?
- (5) What are the reasons for not using IT resources by the respondents?
- (6) What other IT resources do the respondents want?

Literature Review

This section of the study will review literature on some IT resources that are available in the Library in focus. These resources are Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), Compact Disk-Read Only Memory (CD-ROM), Local Area Network, the Internet, and Electronic mail. These are in line with Siddiqui's idea when listing what constitute information technology. These according to him are:

- Automation (Online Public Access Catalogue, cataloguing, acquisitions, periodical control, circulation and reference)
- Personal computer application
- Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD-ROM)
- Telecommunication (networks)
- Online searching
- Electronic mail, electronic bulletin boards and electronic conferencing
- Telefax (Fax).

Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC) is the computerized version of the traditional library catalogue, it is a finding tool used to search for information sources by author, subject, title, and series title. In a study sponsored by the Council on Library Resources by the United States (1982) the researcher find out that OPAC received strong acceptance from the library patrons and staff; the predominant search approach use by the users is subject approach, and the respondents confirmation of ease of use of OPAC interfaces and self-explanatory displays of bibliographic information. However, in another study by Moore (1992), it shows that known-item searches tend to be more successful than subject searches. It revealed subject searches by users even though the systems available have no well developed subject capabilities. Moore(1992) also found the use of title searching as a surrogate for subject access.

Libraries in the developing world have come to appreciate the importance of information available through the International Information System. However, they have not been able to take full advantage of these facilities. This is mainly because of poor telecommunication system and high cost of acquiring electronic information resources. The advent of CD-ROM technology has provided opportunities to libraries in the developing world to have access to offline information available from the developed world on CD-ROM databases (Boye, 1996). CD-ROM has significantly changed the way users' access information. Academic libraries, especially those in the developing countries have embraced the Compact Disc technology as a means of providing information services to their users. Historically, McCarthy, Krause and Little (1997) report that CD-ROM databases first emerged in academic libraries in 1986. The technology has since been embraced in libraries in the developing world to provide reference, serials and other services.

Michalak (1999) reports that CD-ROM has significantly changed the way library

users access information. Patrons have quickly and enthusiastically adopted the technology as an exciting alternative to the print and online method due to its convenience, ease of use and greater degree of control over the search process the medium offers. However, effective use of CD-ROM technology requires thorough understanding of basic search concepts, such as: the use of Boolean operators and other delimiter features that would expedite the search; the use of librarian to assist the user in enhancing access to the technology (Schultz and Salomon, 2000). CD-ROM has significantly influenced library cooperation and interlibrary loans for the purpose of research and advancement of knowledge (Reese, 1999)

Networking is another technology that has influenced the functions and services of academic libraries. OPAC and CD-ROM databases can be put on networking in order to enhance limitless access. The term network covers three types of message-carrying systems viz:

- The provision of library based services such as cataloguing
- Systems which deliver information from a controlled agency
- Systems which allow the passage of information between members of a group or individuals.

The hardware and software configuration of any of the above listed types of network is the same, the basis of their operation is similar Networks, which provide information from a centralized source include online information retrieval, electronic document delivery and publishing systems. The delivery of such services are concentrated on large scale machines (servers) carrying data along lines to individuals at terminals(Oketunji,2000)

Network can be local (LAN) or Wide Area (WAN). A local area network (LAN) consists of two or more computers connected together in a location or within a limited geographical area. The network typology can be bus, ring, star etc. Wide Area Network (WAN) involve interconnectivity of computers in a geographical area wider than that of LAN. Networking or putting CD-Rom databases. Boye (1996) proposed that LAN CD-ROM may in the long term be a less expensive proposition than multiple CD-ROM workstations and multiple subscriptions to CD-ROM databases.

Another network that is much wider than LAN and WAN is the Internet also referred to as World Wide Web (WWW). It is the interconnection of several networks world wide that provide communication access, information sharing, and knowledge. The origin of modern Internet goes back to 1968 with the information of a project sponsored by the Advanced Research projects Agency (ARPA). The agency develop a network called ARPANET which aim at developing a communication infrastructure supportive of resource sharing among defense and academic researchers (Quaternman and Hoskins, 1986).

The Internet provides access to very wide range of information resources, and databases such as JANET, AARNET, APRANET, JSTORE, SAGE, AGORA etc. These resources are made available to users at fast speed. Valauskas (2004) observed that the Internet carries an average of 1,400 pages of typed text per second. Library users can have access to full text document on the net. By logging on the appropriate websites, users can get in touch with individuals, organization, libraries etc anywhere in the world.

Electronic mail is one of the services available through the internet. Electronic mail (e-mail) allows for creation and transmission of messages, which can be addressed to individuals or group of individuals. The recipient can either access the message, respond to it, store it electronically, forward the message, print it or delete it. Oketunji (2000) describes information, data files, letters of documents by means of point-to-point systems or computer increasingly popular method of communication, especially in the workplace as users communicate quickly and easily with one another. Juimba (2000) in his study submitted that e-mail is the

most commonly used application of the internet and it has become a standard practice in the scientific community to have an email address. The email make it possible for two or more people to communicate with each other, collaborate in research, and to share the results of experiments with a wide range of interactive persons from their computer sets. He stated that it is possible for all these to happen within minutes; thus, email has removed the need for postal facilities in communications.

Methodology

This study uses survey method to investigate the patterns of usage of library based information technology resources among the graduate students of University of Agriculture, Abeokuta in Ogun State of Nigeria. The graduate students of the university are enrolled in the thirty-two departments in the eight colleges of the institution. By 2009/2010 session, the total population of these categories of students is nine hundred and eighteen (918). One third of this population is selected at random for the study.

Questionnaire is the main instrument used to gather data for the study. The questionnaire comprises open and closed –ended questions; it is divided into five (5) sections, with twenty-five (25) questions. Copies of the questionnaire (306) were administered on the respondents with the assistance of their respective class representative. Out of the 306 copies administered, 209 copies is retrieved and used for the analysis. The breakdown of the population sample size and respondents is represented in figure 1 The percentages listed for each of the colleges relate to the total copies of questionnaire given to it..

Table 1: Population sample size and respondents by colleges

Colleges	Population Sample size	Respondents	Percentage
College of Natural Sciences(COLNAS)	53	37	70.0
College of Agricultural Management and Rural Development(COLAMRUD)	57	43	75.0
College of Animal Sciences(COLANIM)	45	38	84.0
College of Plant Sciences and Crop Production(COLPLANT)	61	32	52.0
College of Food Sciences and Human Ecology(COLFHEC)	23	16	70.0
College of Engineering(COLENG)	15	11	73.0
College of Veterinary Medicine(COLVET)	12	9	75.0
College of Environmental Resources Management(COLERM)	40	25	62.0
Total	306	209	68.0

From the table it shows that the entire graduate students in the University were

covered, and as such, the findings of this study can be easily generalized.

Data Analysis and Discussion

The year of studies of the respondents ranges between 1 and 2 years. This is because post graduate masters programme at the university are for maximum of 2 years on full-time. 117 respondents (56%) are in the first year of studies of which 64 (57%) are male and 53 (55%) are female and the remaining 92 respondents (44%) are in their second year of studies of which 49 (43%) are male and 43 (45%) are female, respectively. This data is presented in table 2

Table 2: Respondents' Year of Study and Gender

Year of study	Male (Percentage)	Female(Percentage)	Total (Percentage)
First year	64 (57)	53 (55)	117 (56)
Second year	49 (43)	43 (45)	92 (44)
Others	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)
Total	113 (54)	96 (46)	209 (100)

Majority of the respondents are quite aware of the various IT resources available in the library. Analysis of the data on their awareness of the resources reveal that 161 respondents (77%) are aware of CD-ROM databases in the library, 44 of them (21%) respondent negatively and 4 respondents (2%) did not respond. OPAC is an offshoot of Automation in library, it replaces the traditional library catalogue. 202 respondents (97%) are aware of the facility while the remaining 7 respondents (3%) did not respond. Network facility is another IT that is available in the library and the respondents are aware of this. 194 respondents (93%) confirm their awareness of the facility and 15 respondents (7%) did not respond. The Internet is a technology that has fostered an unparalleled degree of communication, collaboration, resource sharing and information access in libraries. The entire respondents stated that they are aware of the connectivity and its offshoot, Electronic mail is well known to all the respondents. These analyses are presented in table 3 below.

Table 3: Respondents' Awareness of IT Resources in the Library

IT Resources in the Library	responses		No Response
	Aware of	Not aware of	
CD-ROM databases	161 (77%)	44 (21%)	04 (2%)
OPAC	202 (97%)	-	07 (3%)
Local Area Network (LAN)	194 (93%)	-	15 (7%)
The Internet	209 (100%)	-	-
Electronic Mail (email)	209 (100%)	-	-

The frequency of usage of these resources by the respondents was investigated. Analysis of data indicates that all the identified resources are regularly used except LAN. 152 respondents (73%) often use the library database, 56 of them (26%) use them occasionally, and only one (1) respondent (.5%) has never used the facility. The use of OPAC is less popular among the respondents because only 58% of the respondents (122 of them) regularly use it, 83 of them (40%) occasionally and 4 of them (2%) rarely use it. The reason for relatively high number of respondents who occasionally use OPAC may be due to the fact that these respondents desire for browsing the shelves to find information source they want. the internet facility and its offshoots (email) etc, are commonly used by the respondents. 188 respondents 90% regularly use the Net, and 21 of them use it occasionally. Local Area Network Facility of the library is the less used among the resources. 178 respondents (85%) occasionally use it, and 31 of them (15%) have never used it

Table 4: Frequency of Use of IT Resources.

IT Resources in the Library	Frequency of Usage			
	Often	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
CD-ROM Database	152 (73%)	56 (26%)	01 (.5%)	-
OPAC	122 (58%)	83 (40%)	04 (2%)	-
The Internet/Email	188 (90%)	21 (10%)	-	-
Local Area Network	-	178 (85%)	-	31 (15%)

On the perceived usefulness of these IT resources to the academic pursuits of the respondents, the findings are presented below in table 5.

Table 5: Perceived usefulness of IT Resources by the Respondents

IT Resources	Frequency of Usage				No Response
	Somewhat useful	Fairly use	Useful	Very useful	
CD-ROM Databases	13 (6%)	-	49(23%)	-	35 (17%)
OPAC	09 (4%)	-	28(13%)	-	63 (30%)
Email	43 (21%)	-	60(29%)	-	94 (45%)
The Internet	16 (8%)	-	21(10%)	31(15%)	13 (6%)

The respondents find the IT resource in the library useful for different purposes. Their responses to the question on what they use each of the equipment for are tabulated below in different tables.

Table 6: Purpose of using CD-ROM databases and OPAC

Purposes	Frequency	%
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To check for bibliography	40	19
Just to browse library collection and content of the databases	07	03
To search for information for assignment	78	37
For research purposes	84	40
Total	209	100

Table 7: Purpose for using the internet

Purposes	Frequency	%
To check for general information	128	61
Just to browse	69	33
To search for information for assignment/research	163	78
For news and current affairs	02	01
Total	209	100

Table 8: Purpose of using Email

Purposes	Frequency	%
For correspondence	189	90
For list sense	05	02
For participation in group discussions	15	08
Total	209	100

From the above tables 6, 7, 8, it shows that the respondents understand what each of the technology can do, and they take the advantages. As such, they make use of the technology for different purposes as tabulated above.

In order to assist the library in taking decision on which IT resources the library should focus more attention, the study sought to know the IT resources the respondents prefer. According to table 9, the preponderance number of the respondents (85%) prefers the Internet, 28 of them (13%) prefer CD-ROM Databases, and only 8 respondents (4%) prefer OPAC. None of them prefer the Local Area Network. The reason for high preference of the Internet among the respondents may be due to its versatility and multimedia capability.

Table 9: Preference of IT Resources

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Responses	Frequency	%
CD-ROM Databases	08	04
OPAC	28	13
The Internet/Email	173	83
Local Area Network	-	-
Total	209	100

In the course of this study, twenty-six(26) out of the respondents who indicated that they rarely or do not use the facilities.was identified and interviewed. The reasons they presented are: lack of know-how ; fear of health related issues(Ergonomic); conservatism, claiming that IT is not necessary for their studies; and accessibility problems.

The study further sought to find out what other Information Technology they wish the library could incorporate besides those focused in this study. Their responses are: installation of more Internet facilities and terminals and acquisition of notable agricultural CD-ROM databases.

Conclusion

This study attempted to find out the usage pattern of library IT resources among the graduate students of University of Agriculture, Abeokuta(UNAAB)library; their frequency of using the resources, their preference among IT resources, and usefulness of the resources to their studies and research activities. Based on the findings of this study, it could be conclude that the majority of the respondents are quite aware of the availability of the IT resources in the university library and understand the potentials of each and that they consider the resources useful to their academic activities , such that majority of them make use of the resources regularly. However, the respondents require assistance of the library personnel to use them maximally. Also, internet is the most preferred among the IT resources available in the library by the respondents perhaps due to its versatility, but some respondents could not or rarely use IT resources because they do not know how to use them among other reasons.

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