UTILIZATION OF MTN FOUNDATION’S DIGITAL LIBRARY PROJECTS IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES: A CASE STUDY OF UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS

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Abstract

This survey study was conducted with the main objective of evaluating the use and services provision of MTN Foundation’s Digital library project at University of Lagos, Nigeria with regards to the objectives of establishing it. A descriptive research approach was adopted for this study. Questionnaire constituted the major instrument used for data collection even though the librarian in charge of this library was interviewed and documentary records consulted to obtain such data as list of electronic resources/database available in the library. The study found out that the library subscribes to 23 varying e-resources/databases. It established that the use of this library is benefitting students as 76.6% of the respondents indicated that the use of this library has enriched their awareness on the existence of various kinds of e-resources while 68.8% accepted that the use of the resources has assisted them greatly in doing their assignments. The study also found out that no user education is conducted in the library hence, resources are under-utilized. Other factors affecting the use of this library include; low bandwidth (96.7%), limited access to computer terminals (64.9%), poor attitude of library staff (47.5%), irregular power supply (34.2%), and insufficient IT knowledge (32.8%). Recommendations such as employment of more staff members, increasing the Internet bandwidth, user education, etc., were given.

Keywords: Digital Libraries, Electronic Resources, Library resources use, Universities, MTN Foundation, Nigeria

Introduction

The poor availability and obsolescence of books, journals and other learning materials have always posed a problem that impairs the ability of higher education institutions in Africa to adequately achieve their purpose of teaching, research and community service for their expanding population of students (UNESCO, 2003). Even though Nigeria has more than three hundred higher institutions presently, the precarious state of the economy has negatively affected the institutions resulting in scholars and students accessing only a small portion of the necessary library facilities
in their institutions. The pitiable state of library facilities has also necessitated the Federal Government of Nigeria to make some interventions through such bodies as, the World Bank Federal Universities Development Sector Adjustment Credit, the Petroleum Special Trust Fund, National Education Materials Procurement Programme and the Education Tax Fund. These bodies assisted institutions with the provision of such facilities as computers, books and journals, and other office equipment for the libraries.

Subsequently, at the instance of the former President, His Excellency, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, UNESCO facilitated the development of a plan that sets out a road map to efficiently deliver local and international content to all federal institutions of Higher Education in Nigerian by means of establishing a Virtual Library Database which was made accesible to them in order to augment their existing library resources. The Virtual Library Database is meant to be a full text databases covering all fields of study including indigenous content.

Though these steps had some level of positive effect on libraries in Nigeria, the digital divide gap with its associated problems were still very much evident in Nigerian libraries. It was against this background that Ogunsola and Aboyade, (2005) recommended the urgent need for Nigerian higher institutions to move from the traditional role of teaching, learning and research to those driven by the information technology. They concluded that any college or university in Nigeria that does not have full Internet connectivity with reasonable speed and relevant ICT facilities in the next few years will not be in a position to fulfil the purposes for its establishment.

Ordinarily, given the limited funding available to academic libraries in Nigeria with the escalating cost of information materials alongside Information Technology (IT) facilities, it is obvious that the acquisition of digital/electronic resources with its accompanying IT facilities will end up being a day dream if abandoned to be handled solely by the library. The need to ensure that users of academic libraries in Nigeria have access to relevant, timely, up-to-date and appropriate information in their fields of interest necessitated the continued struggle to have in place a digital library that will give users access to electronic information resources from varying sources.

It is in light of the above that MTN Nigeria, through its section called MTN Foundation had in 2005 commenced its Universities Connect project which provides computers, Internet access and other infrastructures to Nigerian Universities. This project was embarked upon to achieve MTN's laudable objectives of bridging the knowledge and digital divide, enhancing educational infrastructure development and, providing educational resources for effective learning.

However, even though this laudable project has succeeded in making available and also providing access to diversified digital resources from enormous numbers of libraries globally, there is still need to evaluate the use and service provision of these libraries vis-a-vis the objectives of establishing them. This it is believed will expose lapses and give room for amendments where necessary. According to Nadiri and Mayboudi (2010) library services evaluation help librarians understand users perceptions and it contributes in improving library service quality and meeting users' needs better.
Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to evaluate the use and service provision of MTN Foundation’s Digital Library in University of Lagos, Nigeria with regards to the objectives of establishing them. The specific objectives are:

1. To find out the extent of electronic resources made accessible to users in the library
2. To establish if users are given training on how to utilize the resources
3. To determine the extent to which the resources provided by the library is being utilized by the users
4. To find out how the use of the resources of this library has positively impacted on the students
5. To identify factors inhibiting the optimal utilization of the resources provided in this library
6. To make recommendations based on the outcome of the study

Background information of MTN Nigeria

MTN Nigeria is one of the global mobile telecommunication service providing companies in Nigeria. The MTN Foundation is the vehicle through which MTN Nigeria implements its corporate social responsibility programme. The Foundation was established in July 2004 with a focus on giving back to society and impacting the quality of lives in Nigeria in a meaningful way. The MTN Foundation, which is the arrowhead of MTN's social investment drive, is playing a key role in deploying various programmes designed to help reduce poverty and foster sustainable development in Nigeria.

This digital library project in Nigerian Universities by MTN is popularly referred to as MTN Foundation Universities Connect Project. The institution of this project was brought about by the intense need to bridge the digital and knowledge divide problem being experienced in the nation by majority of the citizens who even though they attend Universities, cannot boast of having utilized electronic information resources in their research activities. This innovative project is designed to provide digital access to information and infrastructure to Federal Universities in Nigeria. The project facilitates access to a collection of digital resources from over 5,500 libraries to assist university students and lecturers with their research works. The project is implemented in partnership with Net-library Nigeria Limited. The present beneficiary institutions of the Universities Connect project are:

- For Phase 1- University of Lagos, Akoka, Lagos State
- For Phase 2- Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Kaduna State
- For Phase 3- University of Nigeria Nsukka, Enugu State
- For phase 4- University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State. (This particular one has been approved but not yet commissioned)
MTN Nigeria's specific objectives of establishing this Education Portfolio are as follows:

- To empower the people through the provision of information and technology resources
- To enable skills acquisition, transfer and development
- To raise national literacy levels
- To provide educational resources for effective learning
- To enhance educational infrastructure development

The scope of the project is as follows:

- 128 networked computers, 3 servers, 2 high capacity printers and 100KVA generator
- VSAT equipment & internet connectivity bandwidth with 2 years subscription
- 2 years subscription to electronic resources through the Net-Library network (Journals, Books, etc)
- Conducive study environment through space renovation, provision of adequate lighting, furniture, and alternative power supply 75b
- Technical training for 12 members of existing library staff to work with NetLibrary over 2 years to build capacity
- One-week library awareness to be held annually for students and lecturers
- One-week awareness workshops to be held annually for approximately 600 students and 120 lecturers
- Initiate a 5year maintenance contract with the University to ensure a conducive environment with a clear sustainability strategy
- Two years comprehensive insurance cover to take care of theft & fire
- An interactive students website - “www.universitiesconnect.com”

Methodology

A descriptive research approach was adopted for this study. The purpose of descriptive research is to describe the current state of affairs at the time of the study without manipulating the variables or having control over them (Salkind, 2006). The study employed survey procedure for the collection of data. According to Nworgu (1991) survey method of investigation is one in which a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from only a few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. The choice of this research design is considered adequate for the study because it will enhance and give a better understanding of the situation on ground in relation to the extent of services provided by the library and also, extent of usage by the users.
The population of this study comprises both the librarians and users of this library. A self-developed questionnaire tagged Electronic Resources Availability, Extent of Use, Impacts and Inhibitors (ERAEUII) scale for users was used for data collection. The questionnaire is divided into four parts. Part A deals with the extent of electronic resources available in the library. Part B concentrated on the extent of use of this library and its resources. Part C sought responses on the positive impacts of utilizing this library while Part D concentrated on identifying inhibitor to the optimal utilization of the resources provided in this library. To complement the questionnaire, the researchers also interviewed the librarian in-charge of this library. The data collected was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using percentages and frequency counts.

**Findings of study**

**Questionnaire distribution pattern**

A total of One thousand (1000) questionnaires were distributed to the library users. Out of this number; 852 were returned while 812 questionnaires were found usable.

**Table 1 - list of electronic resources available in this library**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>E- RESOURCES/ DATABASES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sabinet Online Reference Database</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>EBSCOhost Reference Database</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Jstor</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>HINARI</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>MIT</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>SSRN</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nation Academic Press Database</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>E-Print in physics, Mathematics, computer science and Quantitative Biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Digital Library for earth system education Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Virtual Libraries online</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>ScienceDirect Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Law Journals Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Oxford Journals Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>E-books Online Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Linguistics Database Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Guteng Online Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>The Encyclopedia</td>
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<td>19</td>
<td>The Wiki Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Free Library Online</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Google Search Engine</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>E-Books Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>File Management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Training on the use of the library

On the issue of whether the users are given training on how to use the resources, they all unanimously answered no. This implies that they are not given any form of training on the use of this library. As a result of this, majority of the users of this library are only aware of the existence of a few of the database, thereby underutilizing the resources.

During the interview with the librarian in charge of this library, the researcher was made to know that the library has not actually been training the users on the use of this library neither have they been holding one-week library awareness as indicated in the scope of the project by MTN foundation. The reason for this according to him was that the library lack adequate manpower to be able to perform that function as it has just four (4) regular staff members.

Extent of use of the library

To determine the extent to which the resources provided by the library iss being patronized by the users, they were asked to indicate how frequently they utilize the resources in this library. Options such as; “daily, 2-3 times weekly, weekly, and once in a while”, were given. Their response is represented in the pie chart below:

Table 2- Response on extent of use of the library
The above chart indicates that 66.7% of the respondents responded that they utilize the library once in a while, the other 33.3% responded that they utilize it 2-3 times weekly, while none of the respondents attested to be utilizing it daily or weekly.

**Positive impacts of utilizing MTN digital libraries**

The librarian was equally asked during the interview to comment on his observation regarding the utilization of the resources of this library. It was gathered from his response that the library is not being adequately utilized.

Table 3- Response on positive impacts of utilizing the library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POSITIVE IMPACTS</th>
<th>Frequency count</th>
<th>Percent %</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enriched my awareness on the existence of various kinds of e-resources</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>76.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assisted me greatly in doing my assignments</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>68.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources from this library have made my research work very easy</td>
<td>458</td>
<td>54.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My general academic performance has improved as a result of using MTN Digital library resources in augmenting my classroom works</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>39.4</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 above illustrates the ways and extent to which the use of the resources provided by this library has benefitted the students. The findings revealed that 622 (76.6%) of the respondents indicated that the use of the resources in this library has enriched their awareness on the existence of various kinds of e-resources. This was closely followed by 559 (68.8%) acceptance of respondent that the use of the resources has assisted them greatly in doing their assignments. While the option that 'resources from this library have made my research work very easy' received 458 (54.4%) acceptance, 'my general academic performance has improved as a result of using MTN Digital library resources in augmenting my classroom works' received 320 (39.4%) respondent's acceptance.

Table 4- Response on inhibitors to optimal utilization of MTN Digital Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inhibitors</th>
<th>Frequency count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low bandwidth</td>
<td>786</td>
<td>96.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular power supply</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor attitude of library staff</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited access to computer terminals</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient IT knowledge</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 above shows factors inhibiting the optimal utilization of the resources provided by this library. This revealed low bandwidth attestation by 786 respondents, which is 96.7% of the study's user population. A number of 527 (64.9%) of the respondents indicated that limited access to computer terminals is one of their inhibitors to optimal utilization of MTN Digital library resources even as Poor attitude of library staff was indicated by 386 (47.5%) respondents. Irregular power supply received 278 (34.2%) indication by the respondents while insufficient IT knowledge received 267 (32.8).

Discussion of findings

The findings of the study show that the necessary information communication and technology facilities in the form of computers, printers, scanners, Internet access, database, etc, required for service provision in this library are all available. It also revealed that these facilities are in good working condition. From personal observation, the library has conducive study and research environment. There is adequate space and furniture provision and also alternative power supply.

On the subject of positive impacts of using the library, high percentage (76.6%) of the respondents attested that the use of this library have enriched their awareness on the existence of various kinds of e- resources. A number of 559 respondents being 68.8% of the user population stated that it has assisted them greatly in doing their assignments while 54.4% confirmed that resources from this library have made their research work very easy. This result shows that adequate utilization of these resources by students will enhance their academic performance and assist in making them assets to the society. This finding corroborates with Tella, Tella, Ayeni and Omoba's (2007) findings in their work on Self Efficacy and Use of Electronic Information as Predictors of Academic Performance. This work identified that electronic resources has many functions and benefits that are capable of positively influencing the academic performance of both students and researchers in the university as well as other higher educational institutions.

On the other hand, the analysis of the results reveals some shortfalls which if not taken care of could affect the actualization of the goal of establishing this library. The entire user population of the study unanimously stated that no form of training is given them on the use of this library and its resources. The repercussion could be seen from the result of the extent of use of the library where not even a single user accepted to have been using the library on a daily basis rather a very high percentage (66.7%) of the user population indicated that they use it “once in a while”. It is a common knowledge that an individual will utilize facilities more when he possesses adequate skills necessary for their use while on the other hand he cannot effectively utilize what he does not have any training on.
Low bandwidth and limited access to computer terminals were identified as the major inhibitors to **optimal utilization of this Library.** This finding agrees with those of Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyanu (2005), Edom (2007) and Ukachi (2008) who noted inadequate number of ICT facilities, limited access, among other factors as inhibitors to optimal utilization of this kind of libraries. The forgoing indicates the slow pace at which the movement towards bridging the digital divide is being made. Poor attitude of library staff was also identified as another factor inhibiting the optimal utilization of these resources. This may perhaps be caused by the problem of inadequate staffing being experienced by the library which is likely to be affecting their service provision.

A survey research on the use of ICT equipment carried out by Daniel et.al (2003) shows 70% respondents’ acceptance of incessant electric power failure as a major impediment while this particular work has 34.2% acceptance of this factor. This provision of standby power generator is a pointer that institutions are now realizing the place of power supply in digital/electronic service provision.

**Conclusion**

This study without doubt has led to the establishment of facts as regards the main objective of the work, which is to evaluate the use and service provision of MTN Foundation's University digital library projects in Nigeria. The result of the study showed that this project is appreciated by users considering their testimonies concerning the positive impacts of utilizing the resources being provided. At the same time, it should be noted that mere provision of this resources without creating corresponding awareness on its existence is synonymous with waste of resources as availability is only one of the factors that influence usage but does not necessarily guarantee optimal usage on its own.

**Recommendation**

Based on the findings of the study, if the digital/electronic library must live to continually fulfill its primary goal which is, the provision of information and services geared at satisfying the information needs of users, the following recommendations
meant to check the usage inhibiting factors should be considered and implemented.

- The bodies responsible for funding the library should ensure that the Internet bandwidth is upgraded to enhance its speed. This should also be emulated by similar libraries.

- To curb the problem of limited access to computer systems, the institution should acquire more computer systems to augment the ones provided by MTN foundation. Meanwhile, considering the funding situation of the libraries in Nigeria which Okiy (2005) termed to be inadequate, the library on its own should also develop some fee-based electronic reference services such as, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Abstracting and Indexing services to individuals, etc. This will help them generate funds internally to augment what is being allocated to them for the acquisition of additional ICT facilities to enable larger number of users to access them.

- Users should be trained or given proper orientation on how to use the resources provided by this library more effectively. The relevance of library orientation should never be underestimated be it in the traditional or electronic library environment.

- To actualize the above, more staff members should be employed in the library to assist in the service provision of the library.
References


