

ISSN 2249 8273

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INFORMATION RESEARCH

A Scholarly Peer-Reviewed Quarterly Journal of Library and Information Studies

VOLUME 1

NUMBER 2

DECEMBER 2011

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Prof. H. N. Prasad

EDITORS

Dr. Akhilesh Kumar Singh Yadav

Dr. Ajay Kumar



SPOARS®

SOCIETY FOR SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING AND OPEN ACCESS RESOURCE (SPOARS)

L/17, Hyderabad Colony, Banaras Hindu University,
Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh)-221 005, India.

ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES AND UNDERGRADUATE USERS' PATRONAGE IN UNIVERSITY OF LAGOS LIBRARY: A SURVEY

Ngozi B. Ukachi

Main Library, University of Lagos, Akoka-Yaba, Lagos, Nigeria.

E-mail: ukachingozi2001@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

States that the awareness and use assessment survey was carried out at University of Lagos Library to determine the level of awareness, pattern of usage and usefulness of the library's electronic resources in relation to students' information needs. Questionnaire was the major instrument used for data collection. The study revealed that high percentage of the students are not aware of the availability of some of the electronic resources in the library, even though they utilize the known available ones to them and find them very useful. Lack of information retrieval skills and inadequate number of computer terminals, among others, were identified as obstacles to exploiting these resources. Recommends aggressive awareness creation on available resources, intensive user education on information retrieval skills, provision of more computer terminals, etc.

KEYWORDS: Electronic Information Resources, Users' Patronage, Users' Awareness, University of Lagos Library.

Introduction

The university as an institution has as its major functions— teaching, learning, research, public service, and the conservation of knowledge and ideas. On the other hand, the library, which is the nerve centre of any university is set up to assist in the achievement of the set goals and objectives of the university by providing materials and services which will now and in the future be beneficial to the entire university community and influence the actualization of its set goals. Indeed, the library is an essential part of the university without which it can never be complete and functional.

Libraries until the past two decades were basically discharging their functions via the provision of printed materials and rendering of traditional services which made it compulsory for face to face contact with the users before they can receive any library service. Presently, the service delivery of libraries especially those in higher education sector have taken another dimension. Information needs of learners and knowledge seekers are met through a plethora of sources. Electronic Information Resources (EIRs), that is, library resources in electronic formats, are now acquired by libraries to complement the printed materials and most library services also rendered electronically.

These changes have exerted pressure on the traditional roles of the library as a result of the following:

- Global information explosion as a result of growing numbers of researches, academic publications, and so on.
- Advent of new technologies in information handling and processing.
- Rapid growth in library users' numbers due to increase in student's admission into the institutions.
- Need to forestall mutilation and deterioration of printed materials etc.

Electronic information resources play a prominent role in facilitating access to required information by the users in an easy and expeditious manner. According to Negahban and Mysore (2009) electronic information resources, in reality have become the backbones of many academic institutions. They serve as motivating factor to students as they provide them opportunity to transmit, acquire or download, process and disseminate information on any subject of interest. Use of electronic information resources aid the users in keeping abreast with current developments in their respective subject fields, in contrast with print media which are not regularly updated like the electronic ones.

The provision of EIRs in libraries is necessary for users especially, for the provision of better, faster and easier access to information. EIRs help to expand access, increase usability and effectiveness and, establish new ways for individuals to use information for enhanced productivity in their endeavors. They can be relied upon for timely information which upholds the quote: right information to right user at right time.

More so, the achievement of academic success in universities depends to a large extent on the university library resources and services. Library, as the nerve centre of the university is set up primarily, to assist in the achievement of the set goals and objectives of the university by providing materials and services which will now and in the future be beneficial to the entire university community. Indeed, the library is an essential part of the university without which it can never be complete and functional.

University of Lagos library as one of the biggest academic libraries in Nigeria with a collection of about four hundred and seventy three thousand (473,000) printed copies of textbooks excluding journals, government publications and other periodicals, as at June 2010, is not found wanting in the acquisition of electronic information resources. This is evidenced in the existence of three (3) Electronic Libraries situated at different sections of the library namely; MTN Electronic Library, Law Electronic Library and Electronic Information Centre located at old Media Room. All these are distinct from CD-Rom search services that take place at the Automation Unit of the library.

Though a lot has been said and written about electronic resources which ranges from its ability to retrieve information very fast to retrieving up to date information and several other benefits, no evaluative study has been carried out to establish the extent of patronage of users as well as the usefulness of these EIRs in University of Lagos (UNILAG) library by undergraduate students of the University. Seth and Parida (2006) cautioned that availability of information resources and services does not automatically translate to information accessibility and use. Furthermore, it is also worthy to note that to establish the effective performance of university libraries as instrument of educational development and excellence, students opinion as well as library use pattern

should be one of the determining factors to be measured. It is against this backdrop that this study tends to investigate the use of EIR in UNILAG library by undergraduate students.

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify available electronic information resources at University of Lagos library.
2. To establish if these resources are patronised by undergraduate students and the frequency of patronage.
3. To find out the purpose for which these students use the resources.
4. To elicit general comments from the users on the usefulness of the resources.
5. To identify the factors that inhibits the optimal utilisation of these resources.
6. To make recommendation based on the result of the study.

Scope of the Study

This study is focused strictly on investigating the use of electronic information resources in University of Lagos library by undergraduate students of the university.

Literature Review

The university library as the academic heart of the university system primarily exists to provide its clients with material assistance as well as an enabling environment that will facilitate the achievement of their goals. Ukachi (2008) defined the University Library as the nerve centre of University set up for the achievement of its set goals and objectives by providing materials and services which will now and in the future be beneficial to the entire university community. This is because the standard and educational quality of universities is measured in commensurate with the standard and quality of resources and services available in their libraries. Whitmire (2002), affirmed this when he stated that academic library resources are considered a good measure of an institution's excellence and quality. The university library is indeed relevant in actualizing the goals of the university as the library is the heart of the academic institution and its objectives revolves round it. Moreso, though the basic purpose of the library is "to provide access to information", this provision of information is expected not to be limited to immediate needed information but to encompass the provision of information in anticipation. In order to effectively do this, Ochogwu (2009) documented that libraries and other information related organizations provide a variety of information to society in different formats. Basically, this ranges from printed format to non-printed formats.

The introduction of Information Technology (IT) facilities in the information handling, processing and communication services has influenced the present emphasis on electronic resources which, gives room for current and up to date information to be accessed easily, timely and from even, remote locations without compulsory face to face contact with the provider as in traditional librarianship. Conversely, ordinarily providing these resources without access points like Computer as well as skills required for its use will tantamount to information availability without accessibility. The study conducted by Ojedokun (2001) on "Internet access and usage by the

students of Botswana", revealed that though this resource was made accessible, it was under-utilized.

Electronic information resources play significant roles in academic libraries as they are often faster than consulting print indexes, especially when searching retrospectively and easier when wishing to use combinations of keywords. They open up the possibility of searching multiple files at one time, a feat accomplished more easily than when using printed equivalents. Tella, A., Tella, A., Ayeni, C. O. and Omoba, R. O. (2007) emphasised that electronic information 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. Once the user is connected to the internet, the user can link up with any part of the world for whatever purpose the user intends (Osunrinde, Adekiya and Adeyemo, 2002)

To ensure continued quality resources and services provision in the academic libraries, evaluation of both the resources and services provided should be carried out continuously. Library resources use study is a vital aid for effective planning and management in academic libraries. Hence Amkpa (2000), stated that evaluation of the use of academic libraries is a component of the planning process that provides librarians with feedback to improve the total effectiveness of their libraries in response to the needs of their users. To ensure the achievement of adequate and thorough results, it is pertinent that the evaluative study on academic libraries concentrates on the library users, especially students. In the same opinion, Oyesiku and Oduwole (2004) stated that the library user is regarded as the most logical source to determine whether the library is playing its role satisfactorily or not.

The primary goal of every library is the satisfaction of its users information needs. This goal cannot be achieved by merely providing the information resources without publicising its presence in the library and also training or guiding the users in the efficient utilisation of these materials. Iyoro (2004) in his study on "Serials availability and accessibility for use", identified accessibility as one of the prerequisites of information use. Nwalo's (2001) also carried out a study on Nigerian polytechnic libraries in which he concentrated on how well the library meets the needs of its users relative to the goals and objectives of the library. These studies are geared towards ensuring that resources provided by libraries are made accessible, and meets the information needs of users.

Quite a number of other studies exist on students' use of the library resources. These include studies by Foster (2004) Steinerova and Susol (2005), George, C., Bright, A., Hurlbert, T., Linke, E. C., Clair, G., Stein, J. (2006) and so on. All of them focus on students, primarily undergraduates.

Methodology: Population Size and Sampling Procedure

The population of this survey research is made up of University of Lagos undergraduate students who are registered library users from various faculties in the institution ranging from 100 - 500 levels. The simple random sampling technique was used in this study where every library user has an equal opportunity of being selected as a sample. A total of 1200 questionnaire were administered while 1025 were returned. On examination of the returned questionnaire, 1000

were found usable. While administering the questionnaire, the researcher ensured that none of the respondents was given a questionnaire twice.

Research Instrument

Questionnaire constituted the main instrument used for data collection, even though the researcher verbally interviewed some students to complement the questionnaire. The questionnaire used for this study was drafted and given to two senior professional colleagues to scrutinise. They made suggestions which were implemented. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. Section one dealt with the bio-data of the students which included the age, gender, level and faculty they belong to. Part two included questions eliciting information on their awareness, use, and usefulness of available electronic resources.

Data Collection and Analysis

The researcher personally administered the questionnaires herself between March and June, 2009. The data collected was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis using percentages and frequencies counts.

Findings of Study and Discussion

The demographic information on the respondents revealed that 650 being 65% of the respondents were male undergraduates while 350 (35%) were females. Their age group ranges indicated that 29.7% of the respondents were within the age bracket of 15-20 years old, 47.8% were within 21-25 years old, 18.3% were within 26-30 years old while 4.2% were 31 years old and above. The study also indicated that 12.9% of the respondents were in their 1st year, 24.2% in their 2nd year, 29.2% in their 3rd year and, 26.7% in their 4th year.

Available Electronic Resources in the Library

The respondents were asked to indicate the available electronic resources in the library known to them. Their response is illustrated in the Figure - 1

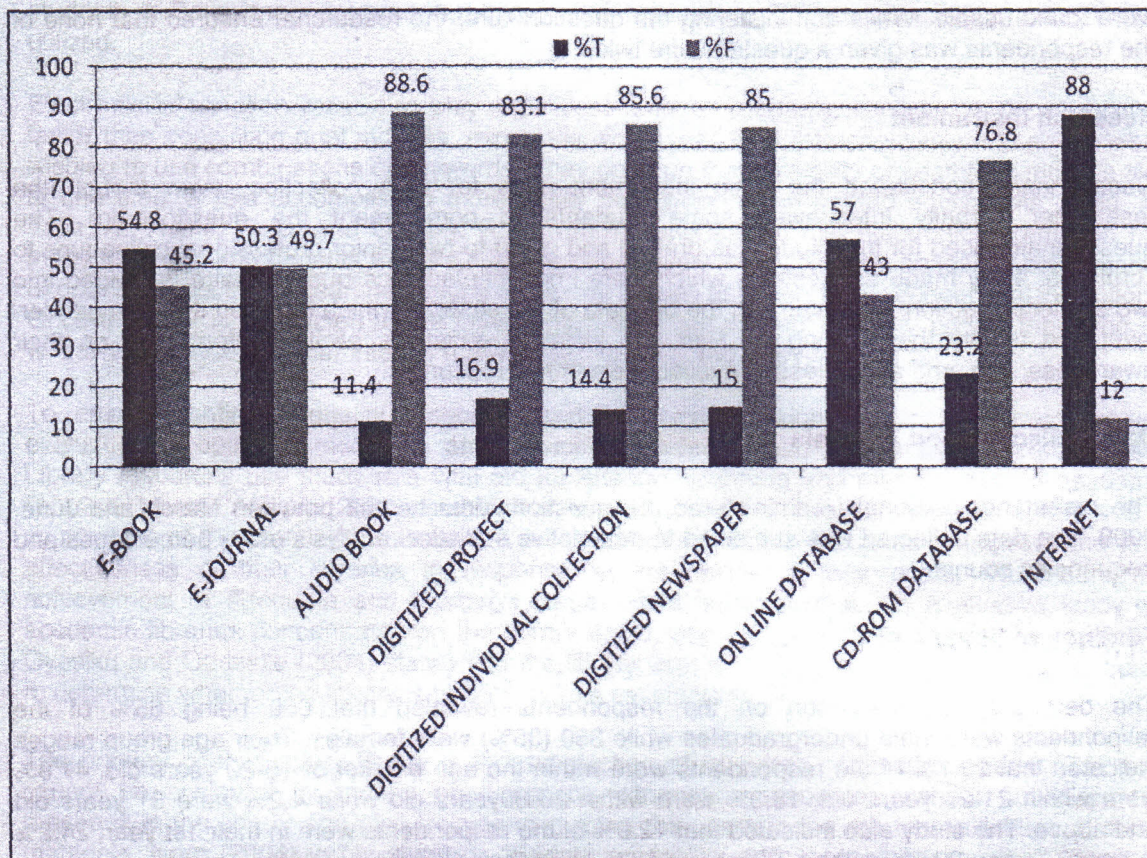


Figure 1: Available Electronic Resources in the Library

The chart above indicates 54.8% and 50.3% acceptance of availability of E-books and E-Journals respectively. More than 85% of the respondents responded in disagreement of the availability of Audio books, Digitized projects, Digitized Individual Collections and Digitized Newspapers. The respondents in the percentage of 57 indicated availability of On-Line Database. Internet availability and access received 88% affirmative response, as the highest patronised source. This is not surprising since Internet allows, in principle, an unlimited number of users, who are part of numerous networks, to communicate with each other within and across networks without passing-through centralised authorities (Abrams and Doernberg, (2007). On the contrary, CD-ROM Database received only 23.2% acceptance. The low percentage acceptance of CD-ROM Database availability and access could be as a result of the fact that they are kept at a secluded place (Automation Department of the library) different from where the other electronic resources are kept hence, it is only the set of people that are very familiar with the services of the different sections of the library that are aware and, can also access and use it.

Frequency of Use of the Resources

The respondents were equally asked to indicate how frequently they use these resources. To ascertain this, the variable options of "very often", "often", "Rarely" and, "Not At All" were given the respondents to choose from. Their response is provided in the chart below.

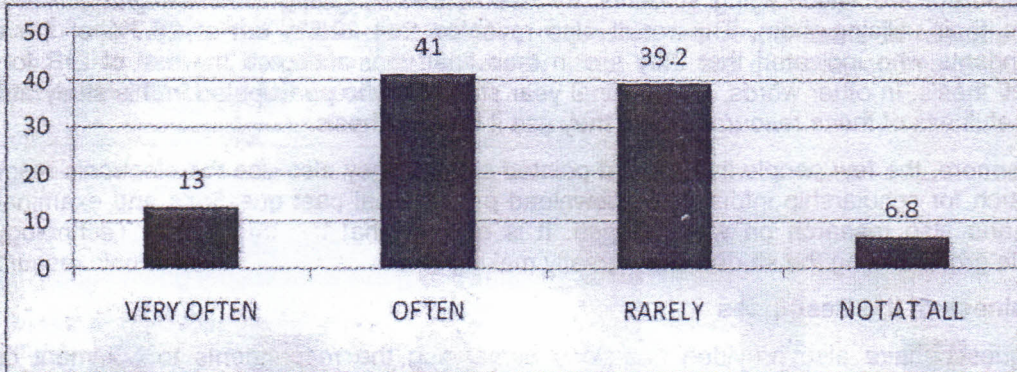


Figure 2: Frequency of Use of the Resources

The above chart shows that the highest percentage among the four groups which is 41% indicated that they use the electronic information resources often. This is a pointer to the increasing preference for, and use of electronic information resources by students for obtaining general information and for supporting their academic work as also identified by Baruchson-Arbib and Shor (2002) - A percentage of 39.2 respondents indicated that they rarely use EIR, 13% gave a response that they use the resources very often while 6.8% attested to not having used it at all.

Purpose of Using the Resources

The purpose of using the resources was also one of the questions asked to the respondents. Their response is seen in the chart below:

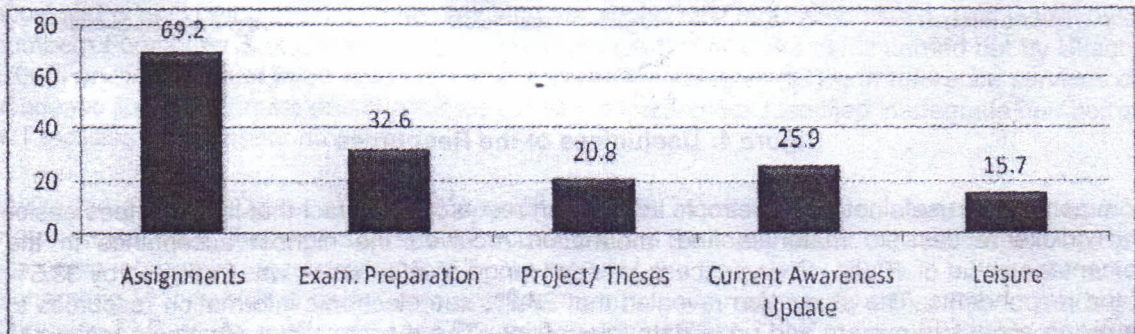


Figure 3: Purpose of Using the Resources

The majority of the respondents in the percentage of 69.2 responded that they use the electronic information resources for assignment purposes. Purpose of examination preparation received 32.6% acceptance, 20.8% out of 33.3% respondents in their final years indicated that they use the electronic resources for the writing of their project/ theses. The purpose of current awareness update received a response of 25.9% and, leisure purpose received 15.7% acceptance.

The implication of assignment purpose receiving the highest percentage value (69.2%) indicates that lecturers are encouraging students' for use of EIR by giving them assignments that will require their utilising them. The result also revealed that 20.8% out of 26.7% of the entire respondents who indicated that they are in their final year accepted the use of EIR for their project/ thesis. In other words, 78% of final year students who participated in this study affirmed the usefulness of these resources thus, they use it for their thesis.

Furthermore, the few people interviewed pointed out that they also use the electronic resources to search for scholarship information, download professional past questions and examinations, learn and also research on web creation. It is obvious that the Information Technology (IT) Literate group among the students are greatly making sufficient use of the electronic resources.

Usefulness of the Resources

The questionnaire also provided questions demanding the respondents to comment on the usefulness of these materials to them. The following is the chart representation of their response.

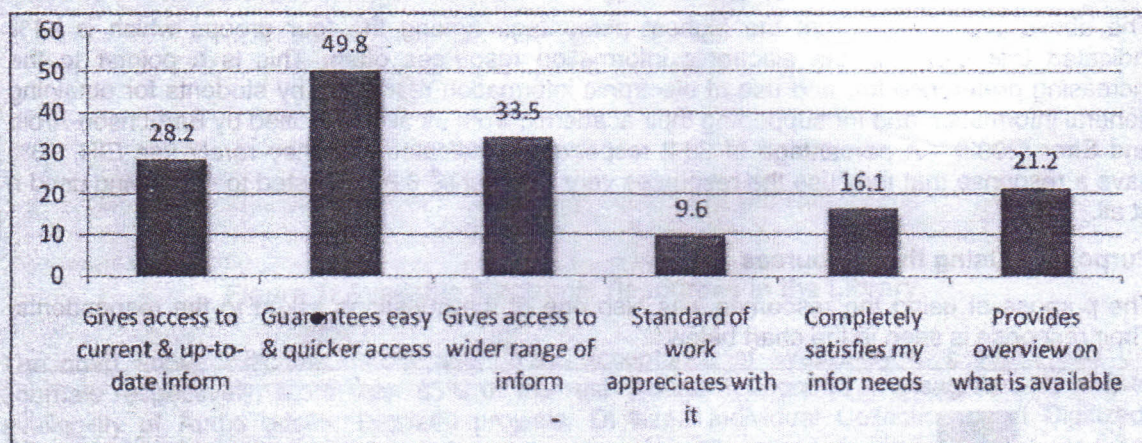


Figure 4: Usefulness of the Resources

Commenting on usefulness of electronic information resources, the fact that it guarantees easier and quicker access to materials and information received the highest acceptance in the percentage value of 49.8%. Giving access to wider range of information was indicated by 33.5% of the respondents. The study also revealed that 28.2% see electronic information resources to be giving access to current and up-to-date information. The response that electronic resources provide overview on what is available on any particular topic was indicated by 21.2% of the total respondents. While 16.1% attested that it completely satisfies their information needs, 9.6% also testified that the standard of their work appreciates with its use.

This result indicated that undergraduate students see electronic information resources as a very vital resource that has the capacity of enhancing the satisfaction of their information needs. This also implies that they (the students) appreciate the availability and access given them to utilise these resources.

Factors that Affect the Use of the Resources

Another question contained in the questionnaire requested the respondents to indicate from options provided to them, the factors that adversely affect their use of the electronic resources. The chart below provides their response.

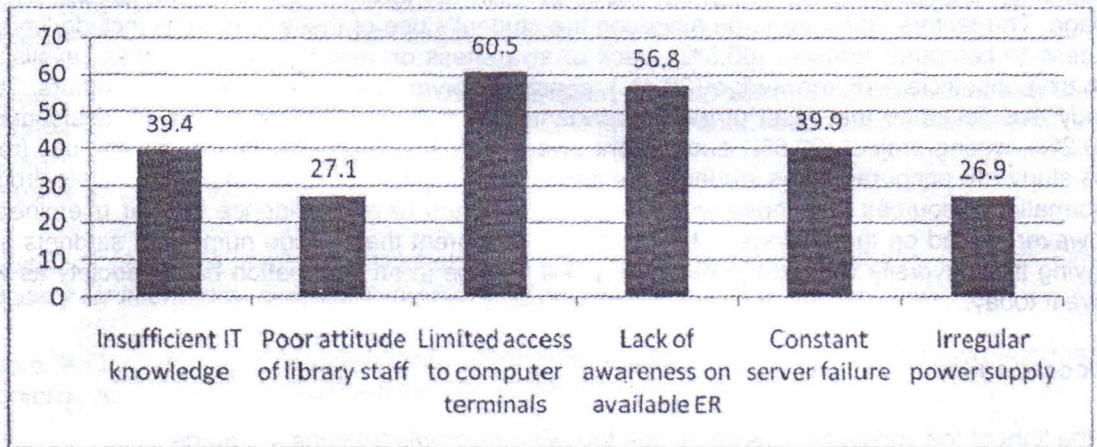


Figure 5: Factors that Affect the Use of the Resources

The chart above identified/show limited access to computer terminals as the highest impediment to the use of these resources with a percentage value of 60.5. This however could be accepted to be true because MTN Electronic library where larger number of computer terminals can be accessed is only being used by members who are specifically registered with it. This inadequate number of computer problem also collaborates with the findings of a study carried out by Ukachi (2008) on "utilization of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in reference services of academic libraries: threats and challenges", in which the findings identified inadequate number of ICT facilities as the major problems to ICT use.

Unlike the study by Daniel et. al (2003) which identified incessant electric power supply as the major impediment, this particular study recorded it as the least factor that affects the use of electronic information resources in this library because the library has acquired Industrial Power Generating Plant which is being used anytime there is power outage by either Power Holdings Company PLC or University of Lagos Power Generating Plant. Lack of awareness on available resources ranked the second highest in position with a percentage value of 56.8. Constant server failure took third position with 39.9% indication level. A segment of the 1000 respondents totalling 39.4 of the entire population attested that insufficient IT knowledge is their major

impediment to the use of these resources. This however implies that emphasis should not be limited to the provision of these resources in the library but, also on training of users in the area of use of these resources. The findings in Ojedokun's (2001) study where lack of information retrieval skills and inadequate provision of computer terminals with Internet access poses problems to student's Internet use also corroborates with this study. Poor attitude of library staff was indicated by 27.1% of the total population while 26.6% indicated irregular power supply.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicates that more than 50% of the sample population make use of the electronic information resources even though they are all aware of the benefits accrued by its usage. The factors identified to be hindering the student's use of these resources include limited access to computer terminal (60.5%), Lack of awareness on exact digital resources available (56.8%), insufficient IT knowledge (39.4%), constant server failure (39.9%), among others. The study also revealed that most of the respondents use the electronic resources for assignment (69.2%), writing project (20.8%) and current awareness update purposes (25.9%). Results from this study are encouraging as students are indicating serious interest in the use of the electronic information resources and those who presently use them have confidence in their usefulness. However, based on the findings of this study, it is apparent that a large number of students are leaving the university without the necessary skill to cope in an information based society as we have it today.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Sufficient numbers of computers with Internet access should be provided for the library users to enhance their use of the electronic information resources.
2. Awareness should be created on the available electronic resources. This can be achieved by printing the names of these resources and placing them at strategic positions including, the notice boards where users can easily sight and read them.
3. Exhaustive user education should be embarked upon by the library especially in the area of information retrieval skills. This is very important because availability and access without effective use by users tantamount to failure on the side of the library
4. The lecturers taking the use of library courses should be informed to integrate information retrieval skill training in the curriculum of study.
5. The electronic information resources available in CD-Rom format should be sent to the cataloguing section of the library for cataloguing and onward inclusion in the database so that the users can easily access information on their availability in the library through the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC).

REFERENCES

- Amkpa, S.A. (2000). Student's use of University of Maiduguri library: An evaluative study. *Gateway Library Journal*, 2(3), 70-80.
- Baruchson-Arbib, S. & Shor, F. (2002). The use of electronic information sources by Israeli College Students. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 28(4), 255. Retrieved July 26, 2007, from www.lis.sagepub.com/content/38/1/33.refs
- Daniel, J.O., Oketunji, I., Okojie V. O., & Abdulsalam, R. (2003). Forty years of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) library service to the nation. S. Olajire Olanlokun (Ed.), *Forty years of library services in Nigeria*. Lagos: Nigeria Library Association, p. 2.
- George, C., Bright, A., Hurlbert, T., Linke, E.C., Clair, G. St. & Stein, J. (2006). Scholarly use of information: Graduate students information seeking behaviour. *Information Research*, 11(4). Retrieved September 26, 2008, from <http://informationr.net/ir/11-4/paper272.html>
- Foster, A. (2004). A nonlinear model of information seeking behaviour. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 55(3), 228- 237.
- Iyoro, A.O. (2004). Serials availability, accessibility for use: perception of in-training information professionals in a Nigerian University. *The Nigerian Library Link*, 11(2), 66-72.
- Negahban, M.B. & Talawar, V.G. (2009). Dependency on e-resources among social science faculty in Iranian universities. *Chinese Librarianship: an International Electronic Journal*, 28. Retrieved March 20, 2010, from <http://www.iclc.us/clie/cl28NT.htm>
- Nwalo, K.I.N. (2001). Effectiveness of Polytechnic libraries in Nigeria. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science in Africa*, 1(1), 41- 48.
- Ochogwu, M.G. (2009). Educating Library and Information Science professionals to bring library services to all. Paper presented at the NALISE conference held at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka from June 2nd, 2009.
- Ojedokun, Ayoku A. (2001). Internet access and usage by the students of University of Botswana. *African Journal of Library, Archival and Information Science*, 11(2), 97-108. Retrieved October 17, 2009, from <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/ajlais/article/view/26101>
- Osunrinde, A.A., Adekiya, I.A. & Adeyemo, K.A. (2002). Internet connectivity vis-a-vis prospect and problems on research growth in academic institutions in Nigeria. *Nigeria Journal of Emotional Psychology and Sport Ethics*, 4, 90-91.

Oyesiku, F.A. & Onaolapo, R.O. (2004). A study on user satisfaction with the services of private university libraries: A case study of Babcock University library, Nigeria. *Nigerian Library and Information Science Review*, 22(1), 21-28.

Seth, M.K. & Parida, B. (2006). Information needs and use pattern of disadvantaged communities: A case study. *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 9(1). Retrieved November 18, 2011, from <http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/%7Embolin/seth.htm>

Steinerova, J. & Susol, J. (2005). Library users in human information behaviour. *Online Information Review*, 29(2), 139-156.

Tella, A., Tella, A., Ayeni, C.O. & Omoba, R.O. (2007). Self efficacy and use of electronic information as predictors of academic performance. *Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship*, 8(2). Retrieved December 11, 2010, from http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/content/v08n02/tella_a01.html

Ukachi, N.B. (2008). Utilization of information communication technologies in reference services of academic libraries: threats and challenges. *The Information Technologist*, 5(2), 62-69.

Whitemire, E. (2001). The relationship between undergraduates' background characteristics and college experiences and their academic library use. *College and Research Libraries*, 62(6), 528-540.