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Foskett, D.J (Dec. 1967) "The training of African document lists for the social sciences"  
Nigerian Libraries, 3(3): pp.101-109

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The result in Table 4 showed that the calculated  $\chi^2$  value of 25.197 with 12 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance is greater than the critical value. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there is significance difference between age of Librarians and their attitude towards the NLA in the North-Eastern Region of Nigeria. Thus, age of Librarians influences their attitude towards the Association. This could be probably due to some divergent opinions held among Librarians in the North-Eastern region with regards to participation in the activities of the NLA in their state chapters. For instance, some senior Librarians see the younger generation of Librarians as neither interested in nor joining the membership of the NLA, while the younger Librarians blame the senior members for laxity towards the Association. However, this finding is at variance with Lawal (2002) on attitude of Librarians towards professional association in Nigeria, which showed highest membership and active participation in the NLA activities across all the age groupings.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study attempted to determine the influence of demographic variables such as gender, status, qualification and age on attitude of Librarians in the North-Eastern Nigeria towards the NLA. Findings revealed that gender, status and qualification have no influence on attitude of Librarians towards the Association while age was found to have influence on their attitude towards the Association in the North-Eastern Nigeria. It is therefore recommended that Librarians irrespective of their gender, status, qualification and age should be proud of their profession and professional association by showing enthusiasm and commitment to support the association by actively participating in the activities of the Association.

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# **IMPACT OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICTS) ON REFERENCE SERVICES: CASE STUDY OF SELECTED ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN SOUTH- WEST, NIGERIA.**

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## **Abstract**

This research aimed to ascertain the impact of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) application to reference services in academic libraries. In doing this, survey method of investigation was adopted using Simple Stratified Random Sampling Technique. Questionnaires and observations were used as instruments to collect data. Data collected was analyzed using tables, frequency, and percentages. Standard and mean deviations were used to obtain overall average scores. Pearson's Product Moment (PPM) correlation coefficient was also used to show variable relationships. The result after identifying the extent of reference services received with the aid of ICTs in the libraries studied revealed that OPAC, Internet, CD-ROM, On-line searches, etc influence quicker and easier retrieval of up-to-date information. It concluded that ICTs generally influences effective reference services

## **Key Words**

Reference services, Information Communication Technology(ies), Automation, Network, Academic libraries

## **Introduction**

Information on virtually all fields and subjects are on the increase as a result of series of developmental activities and research generating more and more information. The awareness of the importance of information in our daily activities has equally increased, given rise to such familiar saying as "Information is Power". Nothing is more important to mankind than to bring within its reach, these means of broadening the horizons of knowledge, thereby, escaping from ourselves and making discoveries, which literarily transform life and make the individual a more valuable member of the society. Information both as a product and as a service is assumed to be ubiquitous, more often, superabundant, but ironically enough, it remains a rare product given that its availability is not necessarily accessibility.

Presently, information is exploding and expanding, taking new forms, and being conveyed by new technologies. The world as we already know is changing dramatically in terms of the way we see, work, socialize, learn and do things. These changes have had profound effects on reference services, hence, the dire need for a



more diversified, easier and upgrading of the services of the reference librarian to meet with the developing needs of users as a result of technological and information explosion. The advent and introduction of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) which is a convergence of three technologies, namely; computers and software, telecommunication, and storage media into reference services is aimed at achieving enhanced performance as well as development of new services. There has indeed been an increasing emphasis on the use of information communication technologies in reference services hence, the traditional desk-bound reference services is now being complemented by remote reference services. This however is because technology increases output and job performance of librarians.

Reference services which according to Ifidon (1997) are personal assistance given by librarians to individual readers who are in pursuit of information, has now metamorphosed from provision of documents or direction of users to documents usually on demand, to, provision of ready and exact information even in anticipation. The efficiency and effectiveness of the reference librarian can only be guaranteed and achieved by embracing the new trends of ICTs. This however, necessitated the researcher into researching on the effects of ICTs use on reference services of selected academic libraries in South- West, Nigeria.

### **Statement of problem**

Reference libraries without Information Communication Technology facilities move and operate at a much lower pace, forcing potential users to patronize and rely on the Internet for much of their information needs. They are not regarded as a well-developed and viable source of information. The reference sections of academic libraries which exist mainly to cater for information needs of researchers from both within and outside the parent institution under this circumstance provide inadequate, belated and obsolete information; hence the researcher decided to study and establish whether the application of ICTs to reference work guarantees the achievement of effective reference services.

### **Objective of the study**

This study has as its general objectives to find out whether the application of Information Communication Technologies influences effective reference services. The specific objectives are as follow:

1. To examine the reference services received with the aid of ICT facilities.
2. To establish user's perception on the noticeable impacts of ICT on the

services they receive.

3. To make appropriate recommendations based on the findings of the study.

## Literature review

Information Communication Technology is most often interchangeably used with the term "Information Technology". According to the International Encyclopedia of library and Information science (2003) Information Communication Technology refers to the application of modern electronic and computing capabilities (technologies) to the creation and storage of meaningful and useful facts or data (information), and its transmission to users by various electronic means (Communication). Oketunji (1999) sees it as a term, which encompasses the notion of the application of technologies to information handling processes, which include Information generation, storage, processing, retrieval and dissemination.

The foregoing however implies that library automation is a prerequisite for the application of information communication technologies in libraries. This is the situation because the application of information communication technology can only be effected in a mechanized library system. In other words, an information communication technology is sine-qua-non with automation.

However, information communication technology encompasses two (2) terms. These are:

1. **Information technology:** This refers to the items or equipment (hardware) and computer programme (software) that allow us to access, retrieves, store, organize manipulate and present information by electronic means. Personal computers, scanners and digital cameras fit into the hardware category while the database storage programme and multimedia programs fit into the software category.

- 2 **Communication Technology:** This refers to the telecommunication equipment through which information can be sought, accused and transferred. Examples are Telephones facsimile modem etc.

According to Oketunji (2000), the information Technologies in libraries at present are divided into three (3) categories. Computers, storage media, and telecommunications. These three aspects, working together have brought about

great improvement in the quantity and quality of library services to users and also amazing reduction in the delivery time.

Generally, Information Communication Technology (ICT) has had major effects on the services that libraries provide and on the ways these services are rendered. These effects according to Lancaster and Sandore (1997) can be categorized as:

- i. Modification of traditional services
- ii. Introduction of new services
- iii. Disintermediation of services
- iv. The extension of services to remote users.

- i. **Modification of Traditional Services:** This has been illustrated in many of the reference services. The most obvious example is the gradual substitution of electronic access for more conventional tools like the OPAC for the card catalog and electronic databases for much use of printed indexes and other reference tools. These developments have generally improved the quality of services rendered by the reference sections of the libraries and library users tend to prefer the new tools to the old. Furthermore the new tools have expanded the horizons of library users e.g by replacing the catalog of a single library by one covering the holdings of many and have made possible significant improvement in the production of online union catalogs coupled with fax, which have greatly increased the probability that an urgent needed item can be delivered expeditiously to a user.
- ii. **New Services:** ICTs have allowed the reference libraries to develop services that would have been almost impossible to offer earlier, that is, in the traditional library service. This is obvious in the production of databases that provide access to millions of journal articles as well as access to the internet which has holdings of even more libraries and limitless variety of formal and informal sources of information. Hanson (1994) in acceptance of this stated that the ability to access databases in electronic form has allowed libraries to offer a number of non-traditional services to their users.
- iii. **Disintermediation of Services:** The applications of ICTs now allow library users to undertake for themselves various activities previously provided for them by members of the library staff. Examples include the searching of Union Catalogs, the initiation of interlibrary borrowing, the unmediated searching of remote or CD-ROM databases. This however gives the libraries and provides staff more time to spend on other activities, perhaps in providing some of the new services alluded to the earlier ones.
- iv. **Extension of Services to Remote Users:** According to Lancaster and Sandore (1997) services to Remote users has emerged as a major issue facing libraries,



particularly academic and special libraries. This has surfaced as a result of the emergence of electronic networks, which allow people to use certain of the library's resources and to obtain services traditionally provided by the library without visiting the library or consulting any member of the library staff. Horwitz (1989) in appreciation of this trend pointed out that remote reference service removes geographic and certain physical barriers (e.g. services to some handicapped groups) to information access. Heller (1992) in support of Horwitz (1989) claims significant increases in library use as remote access to resources become more feasible. He further stated that remote access bring the library more directly into the teaching process because faculty members now often use office terminals to refer to library resources during conference with students.

### **Impact of Information Communication Technologies in guaranteeing effective reference service**

Application of ICTs to reference services is believed to have had tremendous effect on reference service section of academic libraries. Most services that were very difficult or even impossible to be preformed are now carried out without any form of difficulty. ICT has become a basic ingredient of information accessibility and dissemination. Note that, as the range of human knowledge increases as a result of information explosion, so does the need for it to be transmitted faster and easier. Hence Mabel (2002) wholly endorsed that ICTs are increasingly influencing values, principles and even activities of people. Many studies have also advocated that ICTs have transformed higher education as well as reference services by providing greater access, new frontiers to research and learning, and richer contents. (Schulman and Sins, 2002; Mac Dougal, 2002; Werry, 2000).

Cochrane (1992), outlined some of the advantages of information Technology to libraries as follows:

- Allows easy integration of various activities
- Facilitates cooperation and the formation of library networks.
- Helps to increase the range of services offered
- Increases efficiency etc.

Lancaster and Sandore (1997), in establishing the impact of ICTs in guaranteeing effective reference services affirmed that that remote access to the library's electronic resources using computers, modems and networking has made the library more accessible, and has potentially attracted a new population of users who have the capability to use libraries without physically entering it, and perhaps more importantly, remote seekers of information can now gain direct access to what have traditionally been classified as "library" information resources, without

depending on the library's intermediary role. He also reiterated that many users presently especially students much prefer to use electronic reference source as CD-ROM than an equivalent printed tool because their use of the electronic source is said to give them greater personal satisfaction and improves their attitudes towards the library.

Stewart and Olsen (1988) as well as Fairman (1991) as cited by Lancaster and Sandore (1997) also confirmed the above by stating that people exposed to CD-ROM databases which is an ICT facility overwhelmingly prefer them to printed indexes even when there is rather little difference in the search results achieved, and likewise, students who would not go within a bargepole's length of a print abstracting service are queuing up to use CD-ROMs. Ojo (1994) pointed out that ICT facilitates organizational transformation and brings competitiveness and economic prosperity.

### **The Internet**

The Internet as an ICT facility has immensely contributed to effective and efficient reference services to the clientele. According to Weibel (1995) Internet is the electronic resource that is now having the most significant impact on library services and operations and on the professional activities of librarians. According to him this strength of impact is due to its multi-faceted nature since it simultaneously fulfils three important roles in library services. First, it is a resource that can be consulted and used like any other tool. Second, it is more dynamic and far-reaching than any other resource used in the library setting. Finally, it provides a medium of communication that has extended the potential of librarians for interaction beyond the physical library (to users, colleagues, and other professionals), beyond any previous capacity, and in a host of new ways.

Dalrymple and Roderer (1994) characterized the internet as "the most significant telecommunications advance affecting online searching..." Lanier and Wilkins (1994) emphasized that Ready reference can be performed with even greater speed since materials such as dictionaries, census information, US Government documents and the CIA World fact Book are freely available from numerous sites.

### **Network**

The obvious implication of the exponential growth in the world production of documents and information is that no library can be self-sufficient in meeting the information needs of its users hence the need for resource sharing and information network. A network according to Aina (2004) is a computer system that uses communication equipment to connect two or more computers and their resources. In the terms of Madu (2004), a network is a way of connecting computers so that

they can communicate with each other and share resources like printers and storage space. The above definitions imply that network/ networking is the brain behind resource sharing. ICTs on the other hand, provides a platform for library network and also offers opportunity for resource sharing which is a device evolved by libraries to improve their services to users by broadening the base of information availability.

### **On-line search**

Online database is another reference tool in the modern information system. It can be defined as computerized stores of information, which are accessible through the host computer or across computer networks. This implies that the user can search the databases from remote computers or terminals interactively through a system called On-Line Information Retrieval System.

The interaction in on-line searching is fully conversational as the computer or the CD-ROM software will respond immediately to questions or commands, which can still be followed by further enquiries. The implication of the above is that on-line searching could be done using CD-ROM or searching directly from a networked computer.

On-line searching as a reference service is an important service especially as the electronic publishing of some important journals, magazines, e-books and other materials on the Internet (which is growing on a geometrical progression) has removed the need to physically acquire such materials, in printed form by libraries that have Internet access. It has been noted that organizations besides being knowledge organizations must have databases from where managers can retrieve information and use it to bring about innovation. This however is very necessary since online databases contain structured information on specific subjects, which vary greatly in formats.

All these imply that ICTs are required for online searching. Hence, Ayo (2000) stated that some libraries are using ICTs for activities like databases management, Internet search, website management and general on-line service for their users.

### **E-mail**

This is another technology that is ICT based. Oketunji (2000) defined electronic mail as "the transmission and receiving of messages, information, data, files, letters and documents by means of point-to-point systems or computer-based message systems". The availability of e-mail in a library facilitates document delivery and resources sharing.

**Facsimile:** is one of the fastest means of transmitting information



### On-line public access catalogue (OPAC)

This is an important finding tool for information held in the library, as well as information that is held outside the library. It is the automated section of the author, title, and subject catalogue cards. It makes retrieval of information faster and easier than when the catalogue cards are being searched. OPAC is most essentially needed for reference and circulation services. Most academic libraries have their OPAC accessible only at their premises while some still have theirs accessible through the internet.

### Methodology

The descriptive survey method of investigation was adopted for this study using simple stratified random sampling technique. Questionnaires and observations were used as instruments to collect data. Data collected was analyzed using tables, percentages and frequency distribution. Standard deviation and means were equally used to obtain overall average scores while Pearson's Product Moment (PPM) correlation coefficient was used to show variable relationships.

### Findings of Study

#### Questionnaire distribution pattern

A total of two hundred (200) questionnaires each were distributed to three university libraries in the South- Western part of Nigeria. Altogether, a total of five hundred and twenty seven (527) questionnaires were returned as against six hundred (600) distributed.

Table 1 - Response on the extent of reference services received with the aid of ICT facilities in the various services.

Reference services	Very often	Often	Occasionally	Never	Total	Mean	Std. Deviation
On-line service	-	97 18.4%	169 32.1%	261 49.5%	527 100%	1.6888	0.76393
Internet	182 34.5%	121 23%	69 13.1%	155 29.4%	527 100%	2.6262	1.23122
Facsimile	-	-	-	527 100%	527 100%	1.0000	0.00000
Printing	119 22.6%	80 15.2%	105 19.9%	223 42.3%	527 100%	2.1803	1.20351
OPAC	368 69.8%	159 30.2%	-	-	527 100%	4.6983	0.45944
Assistance on the use of ICT facilities	-	108 20.5%	119 22.6%	300 56.9%	527 100%	1.6357	0.80167
Interlibrary loan	-	-	-	527 100%	527 100%	1.0000	0.00000

From the response represented in the above table, it is observed that Internet search is the most commonly utilized electronic reference Service with 182 respondents utilizing it very often and another 121 utilizing it often. As a result of high patronage of Internet services by users, printing services is also highly utilized in the libraries with 119 respondents using it very often. It is also observed from the table that none of the respondents have ever used Facsimile in the libraries although the libraries have them in their acquisition. Their usage is solely meant for the library personnel. A number of 169 respondents (32.1%) use On-line search occasionally, while 97 respondents (18.4%) often use it. This brings the total number of respondents that use it to 266 (50.5%), while 261 respondents (49.5%) said they have never used it. The Table also shows that library personnel do not regularly assist the users on the use of the ICT facilities hence 300 respondents or 56.9% responded that they have never been assisted. On the other hand, 119 respondents or 22.6% stated that the library personnel reluctantly assist them occasionally, while 108 respondents representing 20.5% accepted that they are often assisted on the use of the ICT facilities. On the issue of Inter-library loan, all the respondents responded that they have never received such service,

Generally, the above shows that ICT enhances reference services such as Internet Services (e.g. E-mail, Internet Search, etc.), on-line search, which includes CD-ROM search and, printing services.

*Table 2 - Response on Users Perception on the use of ICT*

S/ N	Users Perception	SD	D	NS	A	SA	Total	Mean	Stand. Dev.
1.	ICT facilities have helped me in my assignments.	-	84 15.7 %	163 31.1 %	80 15.2%	200 37.9 %	527 100%	3.7552	1.12475
2.	Computers have helped me generally in my academics.	-	-	-	159 30.2%	368 69.8 %	527 100%	4.6983	0.45944
3.	CD-ROMs have facilitated my access to information	170 32.3 %	51 9.7%	41 7.8%	148 28.1%	117 22.2 %	527 100%	2.9829	1.60017
4.	Internet has been of tremendous benefit in my access to information.	-	-	80 15.2 %	227 43.1%	220 41.7 %	527 100%	4.26757	0.70685
5.	OPAC facilitates quicker retrieval of information	-	-	-	254 48.2%	273 51.8 %	527 100%	4.5180	0.60015

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; NS = Not Sure; A = Agree and SA = Strongly Agree.



From the above table, 280 respondents completely agreed that ICT facilities have helped them in their assignments while 163 respondents are indifferent, that is, they are neither here nor there. Only 84 respondents which is, 15.7% of the respondents disagreed to this. At the same time, all the respondents agreed that computer have been of great benefit to them in their academic generally.

CD-ROM was accepted by 50.3% of the respondents as having facilitated their access to information while 32.3% of the total respondents denied it. In the section for Internet, 84.8%, that is, 447 respondents attested to its tremendous benefit in respect to access to information while 15.2% could not emphatically say whether it has benefited them or not. OPAC was generally accepted by all as facilitating easier and quicker retrieval of information.

#### Correlation of Reference Services Received and Perception on Information Communication Technology Use

Table 3: Pearsons Correlation (r) of Reference Services Received and Perception on ICT use

	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Correlation (r)	Significance (p)	Remark
Reference Services Received	11.1651	3.43064	527	.675**	.000	Significant
Perception on ICT use	31.6034	3.74169	527			

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

From the above Table, Correlation (r) is .675\*\*, while the Significance (p) level .000, which is less than 0.01 (that is the level of significance). This therefore implies that users perceive Information Communication Technologies use as having great influence on reference services received.

#### Conclusion

This study without doubt has led to the establishment of facts as regards the main objective of the work, which is to find out whether the Application of Information Technologies influences effective reference services in the academic libraries. The result of the study showed that the application of Information Communication Technologies influences effective reference services to be rendered to library users. This was confirmed by the respondents' response on "their perception of ICT on services received". They indicated that Internet services, OPAC, Online search etc, have been of tremendous benefit in their access to information and general academic works. The Pearson's Correlation analysis also shows it by establishing significant relationship between reference services received in this libraries and Information

Communication Technologies use.

Moreover, the outcome of this research has confirmed Henderson's (1992) statement that information technologies provide numerous benefits and advantages to library users especially in the area of provision of speedy and easy access to information, remote access to users, access to unlimited information from different sources etc.

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