

The use of internet by staff for library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the use of Internet by staff for library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi. Three specific objectives with corresponding research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population for the study was the entire 153 library staff in Benue State University Library. Since the population was relatively small and manageable by the researcher, no sampling was employed for the study. The instrument for data collection was a structure questionnaire Data was collected and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Findings of the study revealed that the internet services are utilized in areas such as acquisition services, cataloguing and classification services, awareness services, reference services, selective dissemination of information services, inter-library loan services, documentary services, circulation services, bibliographic services and resource sharing. The findings also revealed that, the internet services were utilized to a high extent for library services delivery. Challenges found to hinder the utilization of the internet services include: lack of maintenance culture, erratic power supply, high cost of connectivity, high cost of maintenance, technology obsolescence, low level of computer literacy required for effective use, poor funding for internet services, low bandwidth, copyright and access restrictions and inadequate hardware support. The study concluded that, Internet services are to a high extent utilized for effective library services delivery in Benue State Library. The following recommendations were made that, library administrators should ensure professional development programmes are provided for library staff that can inculcate computer literacy required for delivery of library services and Government should provide funds to the management of academic libraries to acquire internet services necessary for enhancing the effective delivery of library services.

Keywords: Internet, library service, use of internet, service delivery, Benue State University, Makurdi

Introduction

The Internet has integrated nearly all aspects of the library activities. It plays an important role in service delivery in libraries. Internet is changing the ways the libraries organize, manage, and disseminate information. Different types of library services from membership registration, acquisition, cataloging, resource sharing, circulation, inter library loan, reference services, current awareness service, selective dissemination of information, and document delivery can be offered through the Internet (Uloaku, 2017). The advanced use of internet tools enable libraries to reach both local and

distance users much more easily and effectively. Internet tools such as email and web provides tremendous opportunities for library and information professionals to deliver the information to their users. The activities that were carried out manually in libraries with so much stress and strains are now being carried out smoothly with the help of ICT with greater effectiveness.

The application of the internet in libraries and information centres makes available to the information user a wide range of learning resources available on the net especially the World Wide Web (www) and the electronic mail. In recent years,

Internet and e-resources has emerged as a powerful educational information tools that has been spread technological literacy and given people all over the world fast access to vast resources (Islam & Umme, 2015). Its availability has paved the way for some associated services in respect of serials such as browsing, e-mail, online system and information management. The Internet has found useful applications in online data repositories, library catalogues, journals, news services, student and financial administration systems, online supported or solely online conducted teaching, as well as in digital communication with fellow students and lecturers (Shehu, Urhufe, & Aworo, 2015). In the view of Shehu, Urhufe, and Aworo (2015), the internet is very useful to university students and staff in Nigeria because it enables them to have access to timely, accurate and relevant information that cannot be obtained from library shelves.

The benefits of the internet in library parlance cannot be over emphasized. Its adoption and adequate usage by library staff is however fundamental in justifying the huge investment required for the deployment and maintenance of internet services in libraries. Hence the investigation into the use of Internet by staff for library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi, Nigeria.

Literature review

Internet has made it possible for libraries to access a wealth of up-to-date resources worldwide, give quicker access to specialist in a number of disciplines and allow librarians to reach each other and users with messages and documents through the internet (Onwih, 2017). Hence, Krause (2021) stated that an enormous variety of information, text, and media are available to almost anyone via the Internet: discussion groups, books available for download or for

online reading, journal and magazine articles, music and video clips, virtual “rooms” for live “chats.” Hamidu and Hauwa (2015) assert that for libraries to remain relevant in the 21st century, internet services must be provided and applied to all its operation and services. According to the authors, the use of Internet facilities in libraries ideally enhance operations and services such as cataloguing, collection development, serials, circulation, reference services, inter-library loan/cooperation, to simplified challenging and time consuming task, disseminate information to users efficiently and effectively as well as manage large amount of information.

Internet is applied to the services of academic libraries to ensure that information is delivered timely, accurately and precisely. According to Affum (2021). The internet creates a host of opportunities for information consumers and users. Information is also at the heart of all academic libraries. It is the duty of these academic institutions to make the information accessible to students and teaching staff. Libraries are using the internet to support their fundamental functions and services. Butt, Qutab and Mahmood, (2011) reported in their study on Internet use in library functions and services in libraries of Lahore that Internet is applied mostly in acquisition, classification and cataloguing, reference, document delivery, current awareness service, selective dissemination of information and Interlibrary loan to enhance service delivery and at the same time save time.

Internet offers to the academic library patrons the ability of browsing and therefore selecting library materials of other famous libraries of the world such as library of congress, USA, Alexandra Library, Nigerian National Library etc. With the application of Internet in libraries, librarians can perform their functions more effectively

and efficiently while patrons will get satisfactory answer to their query/queries within the shortest time, as Faboyinde (2006) opined that the application of Internet in Nigerian libraries shows consciousness of the significant role Internet play in delivering library services. Similarly, according to Rashid (2023), the internet has a significant impact on libraries as it has influenced various aspects of library services such as acquisition, technical processing, inter library loan reference services, information services, marketing of library services, user education among others.

The Internet has changed the landscape of information as it supports multi-user environment and allows users to access and manipulate information without congestion thereby making the library disseminate information without necessarily stocking printed materials on the shelves. Internet availability has paved the way for some associated services in respect of serials such as browsing, e-mail, online system and information management. The use of the Internet in libraries and information centres has enabled users to have access to a wide range of learning resources available on the net especially the World Wide Web (www) and the electronic mail. In recent years, Internet and e-resources has emerged as a powerful educational information tools that has been spread technological literacy and given people all over the world fast access to vast resources (Islam, Maidul & Umme, 2015). Internet has helped for easy accessibility and dissemination of information. According to Oketunji as cited in Uloaku (2017) the role of the Internet is to provide a way for researchers to have access to each other and to serve as a tool that facilitate their research. With the use of the Internet services like discussion groups and e-mail, it is possible to post message which include request for information:

seeking book titles or reference materials, asking for names and addresses of people who have expert knowledge in particular areas. Islam and Panda, (2009) stated that the internet has greatly enhanced the practice of librarianship. This implies that the internet has helped library staff to effectively deliver library services to her users in academic libraries in Nigeria.

The Internet provides a number of services in academic libraries for the purpose of retrieving and disseminating of information to and from computers on the network. These services include; communication services such as electronic mail, telnet, newsgroup, internet relay chat, mailing list and instant messaging; information retrieval services such as file transfer protocol, Gopher, Archie and Very Easy Rodent Oriented Netwide Index to Computer Achieved (VERONICA) and World Wide Web services such as video conferencing. Ajileye as cited in Oloaku (2017) opined that, the Internet offers a wide range of services in academic libraries. These services according to the author include: electronic mail, bulletin board, file transfer, remote login, index programme, news group, electronic surfing, and video conferencing. According to Brinley, (2010), Internet services applied in the library include Gopher/WAIS/Archie/Veronica, Internet explorer, Telnet, Chat, World Wide Web, Electronic mail, File transfer protocol, Mozilla fire fox, e-bay, Bing, Ask.com, Google, Wikipedia and many more. According to the author, the advanced use of these Internet tools enables libraries to reach both local and distance users much more easily and effectively. Internet tools such as email and web provides tremendous opportunities for library and information professionals to deliver the information to their users. The activities that were carried out manually in libraries with so much stress and strains are now being carried out

smoothly with the help of Internet with greater effectiveness.

Internet is utilized to the services of university libraries to ensure that information is delivered timely, accurately and precisely. Internet is changing the ways the libraries organize, manage, and disseminate information. Different types of library services from membership registration, acquisition, cataloging, resource sharing, circulation, Inter Library Loan, reference services, current awareness service, selective dissemination of information, and document delivery can be offered through the Internet. In view of this, Butt, Qutab and Mahmood (2011) reported in their study on Internet use in library functions and services in libraries that Internet is applied mostly in acquisition, classification and cataloguing, reference, document delivery, current awareness service, selective dissemination of information and Inter library loan to enhance service delivery and at the same time save time. The advanced use of Internet tools enable libraries to reach both local and distance users much more easily and effectively. Internet tools such as email and web provides tremendous opportunities for library and information professionals to deliver the information to their users. This is why Okafor (2011) reported that, libraries are using the Internet to support their fundamental functions and services and that the librarians and academics in institutions of learning utilize the Internet very much in carrying out their services and research.

Internet can play an important role in enhancing the effectiveness and development of library services. Internet is changing the network of libraries and information centres. Its utilization to library services is believed to have had tremendous effect in libraries. Most services that were very difficult or even impossible to be performed are now carried out without any

form of difficulty. Osuala (2007) stated that with the utilization of Internet in libraries, librarians can perform their functions more effectively and efficiently while client can get satisfactory answers to their query/queries within the shortest time while libraries can perform their functions more effectively and efficiently with the help of the Internet services.

Review from extant literature has shown that despite the importance of the utilization of internet services for effective and timely library services, it is bedeviled by a plethora of challenges. In developing societies like Nigeria, the utilization of internet services for the delivery of library services has been affected by a plethora of problems. Ojedokun (2007) identified inadequate funding, epileptic power supply, limited computer/ information technology literacy, ineffective planning and poverty and lack of skilled manpower and inadequate skilled manpower as challenges to effective ICT utilization in Nigeria. Afolabi and Abidoye (2013) stated that poor infrastructural facilities, low level of ICT compliance, poor maintenance of ICT equipment, lack of ICT policies, inadequate technical and skilled manpower, erratic power supply, poor funding, and technology obsolescence are barriers to effective ICT integration in library services. One of the most disruptive problems to Internet application is the erratic nature of electricity in Nigeria (Uloako, 2017). According to the author, electricity problem has over the years adversely affected the installation and running of computer networks. These challenges implied that despite the importance of the utilization of internet services to the library for service delivery, there exist challenges confronting it its application particularly for effective library services delivery.

Literature has shown that the Internet has had a great impact on the world's

libraries in the past decades. It has changed the functioning of libraries of institutions of higher education the world over. Academic libraries' operations and functions have been inclined to the use of internet to deliver most of its services. The utilization of internet services is now a common phenomenon in some Academic Libraries in Nigeria and Benue State is not an exception. Housekeeping operations in the library like circulation, cataloguing, acquisition and serials among others have been made efficient and timely through the utilization of the Internet. A lot of excitement characterized the prospects of moving away from the manual methods of performing routine jobs by library staff to computerized step by step online approach to achieving better results in academic libraries in Benue State. The Internet access and use can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of library services and functions. It also affects the level, quality and compatibility of library services offered to users. Internet has increased not only the quality of traditional library services but also has made it possible for libraries to pioneer in new services in a constantly changing environment. Today, it is considered the responsibility of libraries to provide the Internet facilities just like books or any other informational sources. Despite the importance placed on internet for enhancing services delivery in academic libraries, the observed that, librarians seem to exhibit negative attitudes towards the use of the internet to deliver services in the university libraries in Benue State. It is in view of these that this study is undertaken to investigate the utilization of internet services for effective library services delivery in Benue State University Library.

Statement of the Problem

The utilization of Internet in library services increases efficiency and effectiveness and also ensures the delivery of timely, accurate,

precise and relevant information to patrons. It also places librarians in a position to face the 21st century challenges of global information society. It is however the researcher's observation that library staff seem not to have a clear vision about its importance and usability for library functions. As observed by the researcher, the librarians seem not to fully utilize the internet to deliver services in the university libraries in Benue State.

The consequence of this observation is that the major aim to which internet is adopted in university libraries to enhance service delivery will be defeated. The researcher is hence spurred into investigating the use of Internet by staff for library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi.

Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study are to determine the:

1. Areas of utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi
2. Extent of utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi
3. Factors that hinder the utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi.

Research questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What are the areas of utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi?
2. What is the extent of utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi?

3. What are the factors that hinder the utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi?

Methods

The research design for this study was a descriptive survey design. The study was carried out in Benue State. The population of this study was the entire 153 library staff made up of professional and nonprofessionals in Benue State University Library. The instrument for data collection for this study was a structured questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts,

percentages, mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions.

Results and discussion

The results are presented and discussed according to the research questions.

Research question one: What are the areas of utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi? In order to answer this research question, data on the areas of utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi were collected and analyzed as presented on Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency Counts and Percentages of the Areas of utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi

Areas of utilization	FREQUENCY		PERCENTAGE (%)		DECISION
	U	NU	U	NU	
Acquisition Services	303	0	100	0.0	Utilized
Cataloguing/Classification Services	303	0	100	0.0	Utilized
Awareness Services	273	30	90.0	10.0	Utilized
Reference Services	300	3	100	0	Utilized
Selective Dissemination of Information Services	278	25	91.7	8.3	Utilized
Inter-library loan Services	280	23	92.4	7.6	Utilized
Documentary Services	292	11	95.7	4.3	Utilized
Circulation Services	290	13	95.7	4.3	Utilized
Bibliographic Services	297	8	98.0	2.0	Utilized
Resource sharing	303	0	100	0.0	Utilized

Key U = Utilized; NU = Not Utilized

Table 1 reveals the areas of utilization of internet services for effective library services delivery in Benue State University Library in Frequencies and Percentages. From the table as indicated by the respondents, all the items (16 - 25) with 'percentage utilized' above 50% are considered the areas of utilization of these internet services for effective library

services delivery in Benue State University Library. This finding corroborate with that of Butt, Qutab and Mahmood (2011) whose study on access and use of the Internet in the Libraries of Lahore, Pakistan reported that Internet is applied mostly in acquisition, classification and cataloguing, reference, document delivery, current awareness service, selective dissemination of

information and Inter-library loan to enhance service delivery and save time. The findings of the present study as observed from the data collected implied that, internet services has a wide range of areas of utilization to enhance the delivery of library services.

Research question two: What is the extent of utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi? In order to answer this research question, data on the extent of utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi were collected and analyzed as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation analysis of the extent of utilization of internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi

S/No	Internet services	Mean (X)	Standard Dev.	Decision
26	Electronic Mail (email)	2.99	.82	High Extent
27	World Wide Web (www)	2.87	.82	High Extent
28	Internet Chat	2.81	.97	High Extent
29	Internet Telephone	2.52	.92	High Extent
30	Online Public Access Catalogue	2.68	.92	High Extent
31	Electronic Library (e-library)	2.61	1.10	High Extent
32	Own Website	2.77	.99	High Extent
33	Web 2.0	2.96	.88	High Extent
34	Video conferencing	2.00	1.01	Low Extent
35	Newsgroup	2.23	.81	Low Extent
36	Mailing list	2.69	.79	High Extent

Table 2 shows the extent of utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi in mean and standard deviations. From the table as indicated by the respondents, items 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, and 36 have Mean values ranging from 2.52 – 2.99 which are above the benchmark of 2.50. This showed high extent of utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi. Items 34 and 35 have mean values less than 2.50 which are considered low extent on utilization. Although the findings disagrees with that of Hamidu and Hauwa (2015) who reported that internet services applied were inadequate in meeting user’s information

needs, the findings of the present study as observed from the data collected implied that, internet services have been found to be useful in enhancing library services delivery in Benue State University, hence the high extent of application observed.

Research question three: What are the factors that hinder the utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi? In order to answer this research question, data on factors that hinder the effective utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi were collected and analyzed as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation analysis of the factors that hinder the effective utilization of internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi

S/N	Challenges	Mean (X)	Std Dev.	Decision
37	Lack of maintenance culture	3.36	.87	Agree
38	Erratic power supply	3.41	.89	Agree
39	High cost of connectivity	2.94	.91	Agree
40	High cost of maintenance	3.44	.99	Agree
41	Technology obsolescence	2.92	.88	Agree
42	Low level of computer literacy required for effective use	3.12	.91	Agree
43	Poor funding for internet services	3.29	.91	Agree
44	Low bandwidth	2.87	.87	Agree
45	Copyright and access restrictions	3.22	.77	Agree
46	Inadequate hardware support	2.98	.86	Agree

Table 3 shows the challenges that hinder the utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi in Means and Standard Deviation. From the table as indicated by the respondents agreed to all items (37 - 46) with Mean values above the benchmark of 2.50. This showed that the items presented to the respondent are the factors that hinder the effective utilization of Internet by staff for effective library service delivery at Benue State University, Makurdi. The findings corroborate with that of Shehu, Urhefe and Aworo (2015) who studied accessibility and utilization of internet service in Nigeria Libraries and reported that lack of search skills, information overload, power outage, irrelevant information, difficulties in navigation of website, inaccessibility of some sites and unavailability/ inaccessibility of the internet services were some of the challenges faced by the staff in Nigeria libraries. The implication of the present finding is that, despite the enormous efforts made on the application of internet to enhance library services delivery in Benue State University Library, there are a plethora of challenges that still hinders its effective utilization which needs to be surmounted.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers concluded that, Internet services are to a high extent utilized for effective library services delivery in Benue State University, Makurdi. However there are a plethora of challenges affecting the utilization of these services which needs to be surmounted for effective delivery of library services.

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations were made

1. Management of the university library should ensure professional development programmes are provided for library staff that can inculcate computer literacy in them required for delivery of library services
2. Network and related internet services should be provided in the university library to enhance library services delivery since the need for connectivity can no longer be ignored in this era of information and communication technology
3. Government should provide funds to the management of the university libraries to acquire internet services necessary for enhancing the effective delivery of library services.
4. Management of the university libraries should ensure adequate

hardware support facilities are provided that can enhance effective library services delivery in academic libraries.

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