The Academic Librarian and the Internet: A Survey, Attitude and Impact in Nigerian Universities

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Abstract: This study is focused on attitudes and activities of the Academic Librarian with regard to the Internet. The study reveals that most Nigerian Universities have Information and Communication Technology Centres and are connected to the Internet but an insignificant number of academic libraries are connected. The study reveal that most academic librarians spend less than one h daily on the Internet for two main reasons – E-mail and surfing. They lack adequate skills for other activities because of inadequate training and lack of personal computers. The study tries to discuss the traditional role of academic libraries and analyzes the way in which this role is changing. Academic Librarians continue to have a significant role to play in the delivery of library services and that applies to both traditional and electronic library services. It suggests ways in which academic librarians can acquire skills to meet the present technological changes.

Key words: Academic librarian, internet, electronic library

INTRODUCTION

The development of effective information delivery systems is a key component of university teaching and learning and modern technology greatly enhances such systems. The Internet is an open inter-connection of computer networks that enable the computers and the programs they run to communicate directly. There are many small-scale, controlled-access enterprise internets but the term is usually applied to the global, publicly accessible network, called simply the Internet or Net. By early 2000, more than 100,000 networks and around 100 million users were connected via the Internet (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopedia), 2002. Every second massive volumes of information are routed through the internet as people carry out scores of tasks, ranging from sending e-mail or purchasing products to conducting scientific research. Thirty years ago, providing research materials to a faculty and students involved purchasing excellent printed materials and providing access to them with a card catalog using the expertise of trained subject specialists. Acquisition was the most important strategy for building strong research collections. Today's libraries can obtain access to rich and diverse collections in electronic format as well as in print. With regard to electronic resources, acquisition is no longer the main strategy: now the key to great libraries is providing access to resources in a reliable, easy-to-use and affordable manner through licensing arrangements and information discovery software and delivery services. Access relies on several important factors including automating the catalog and developing library website, robust local area network, adequate facilities and equipment and sufficient and a reliable infrastructure. The access issues are the most problematic area for the Nigerian Universities libraries. .

The academic library: Academic libraries support teaching and research and promote culture as well. These libraries provide lending services, inter-library loans, reference and selective dissemination of information to students, professors and researchers. Their collections include printed and audiovisual materials related to the degrees offered by each institution. According to, the contemporary academic library, with its collections, staff and facilities, is an active participant in teaching, research and service. The setting and environment in which information seekers operate have changed and information overload is one of the challenges to be addressed. As technology changes, the traditional concepts of information location and the use of library services, new emphasis needs to be placed on helping students become independent information users. In other words, students must become information literate.

Information literacy is a set of skills and concepts essential to functioning in today's information-based society. These skills and concepts include the ability to locate, analyze, evaluate, synthesize and use information from a variety of sources. To implement this concept, academic librarians work with teaching faculties to integrate

information resources into class assignmnents. Academic librarians also help users identify, locate, use and evaluate information resources. Many librarians also teach user-education courses for students. The many new information products and the rapid rate at which technological changes occur makes it difficult for even sophisticated library users to grasp and use all the resources available to them. Academic librarianship is one of the professional public services, demanding skill in communication, familiarity with information sources and a wide general knowledge. In recent years, academic librarians have tried to anticipate users questions and to respond to recurring queries by preparing guides, flyers, signs and audio-visual presentations to aid library users. In academic institutions, librarians offer courses in bibliographic instructions, library use and research methodology. As the computer has changed the forms of the library catalogues, reference libraries have found themselves increasingly involve in helping users with these tools.

During most of the 20th century, library catalogues consist of drawers filled with printed or typed cards. Catalogues are now on microfilms, on microfiche, in book form and on computer terminals. A whole new subfield of reference librarianship has developed rapidly in the last decade in the form of database searching the commercially and publicly developed database bibliographic information about materials in a great variety of fields. Originally devoted largely to the sciences, such automated databases now embrace a comprehensive array of subject fields. The cost of these searches, whether covered by the library or the user, is often offset by the great efficiency.

Internet facilities in Nigerian universities: A recent survey by Blakes,[1] indicated that about 80% of Nigerian Universities have information and communication technology centres connected to the Internet. That is an incredible statistics when one considers that only five years ago, virtually no Nigerian University had information technology centre connected to the Internet. This technology has obviously had some impact on the academic environment. But what kind of impact had it had? What do academic librarians think about the Internet and how are they using it? Answering questions such as these is the purpose behind this current study. Although, a recent search of the literature revealed a great many articles about the Internet and librarians, there were very few studies available on how academic librarians use the Internets with the exception of several studies dawn on how special libraries use the Internet Scarlett[2] and Kirriemuir[3].

Most Librarians in developing countries believe that the purpose of the library was to provide books and other materials to the public and that technology would not replace the need for libraries and librarians. In addition, most believe the continued growth of the Internet and other online resources would not diminish the importance of the library and the librarian.

Objectives: The objectives of this study were as follow:

- To determine how many academic libraries are connected to the Internet in Nigeria
- To determine the attitude of academic librarians towards the Internet
- To determine how skillful are academic librarians in the new technology.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research questionnaires were administered to 100 academic librarians across the country. The names of the librarians were picked from the "who is who in Nigerian University Academic Libraries" through random sampling method in twelve universities. The questionnaires were personally delivered and retrieved after two weeks of submission. The questionnaire was designed to find out how many libraries were connected to the internet, the attitude of academic librarians towards the internet and to know how skillful they are in the use of internet facilities. A Total of 84 questionnaires were returned. This represented 84% return rate of completed research questionnaires.

Review of related literature: Stated that "information literacy and the Web are paramount issues in academic librarianship". It is impossible these days to read a library journal, attend a library conference, or even have an informal chat with other librarians without hearing the phrases "MARC format," "MARC records, "or "MARC-compatible." Many librarians have not had an opportunity to take formal courses explaining the important topics of library automation and the role of MARC, yet automated library systems remain an important part of their libraries. Aina,[4] stated that the Internet has provided many learing and instructional resources on various topics through its world wide web.

The idea that the academic library and the campus computing center should collaborate or cooperate in some way to equip librarians for the new information society was first seen in the library literature at the end of the 1970s. Matthews, Battin and Neff are frequently cited. The best known of these is Battin. She presented a vision

of the 1990s, with an electronic library that included a scholarly information center. She described bringing together information resources and explored the role of librarians in delivering them.

Oketunji[5] confirmed that the application to information technologies in Nigerian Libraries has today become an acceptable norm being the most realistic way and means of providing timely accurate and efficient information services. Library automation has been a topical issue in Nigeria since the early eighties. To date, the issue of ICT has generated a lot of debates, seminars, workshops and articles. The global infrastructure of the Internet has unleashed a flood of information to the public writing on the importance of Internet to the libraries in Nigeria. Akinsete[6] asserted that the Internet connects over 16,000 regional networks and serving over 80 million active users with about over 180,000 new users every month spread over 60 countries of the world. The advent of Internet has permitted libraries to access programmes, retrieve documents information, study and books, exchange data and send mails. Thousand of the messages are sent across the digital links. Daramen[7] and Tiamiyu[8] enumerated the advantages of Internet to the librarian and information specialists as follows:

- Personal access to specialists and experts in hundreds of disciplines
- Opportunity for librarians and libraries to reach other librarians with messages, documents and information independent of the problems of mails, telegraph or even fax.
- Provides a wealth of up-to-date information unavailable in bound volumes.
- Collect news and facts, which can be stored on one's computer for later use in reference sources.
- Allows one to communicate with any professional colleague around the world for the progress and development of professionalism.
- Librarians can provide better services to their patrons by giving them access to information that will be difficult to locate in any other way.
- Permits accessibility to bibliographic records of millions of book and as well as the details of the collection of academic and research libraries around the world.
- Obilge librarians to verify and validate bibliographic information, locate on obscure title or study for library clients, compile bibliographies and compare subject specialties in our libraries located locally or internationally.

- Librarians can check for new titles, order for them from a house or even make payment through the Internet.publishing
- On the Internet, valuable information in electronic libraries, books, journals, magazines and newsletters are made available. The journals are like their printed counter parts, which appear on regular schedules, having a team of editors and reviewers that focus or specific fields and disciplines. Many electronic journals publish original researches like their study alternatives and reference questions can only be answered through this medium.

Information literacy and its crucial relationship to the Web is one of the paramount issues in librarianship right now. The question to ask is, are Librarians "Information illiterate or lazy" in Nigeria? In other words, does the Web simply pose a new instructional challenge to librarians to help students more effectively use and critically analyze a pool of information that potentially enriches the educational environment?

RESULTS

The first two questions simply asked Librarians whether or not their university has Information and Communication Technology Centre connected to the Internet and the second question is on if the library is connected to the Internet.

Table 1: Time spent on the internet in a typical day

Time	No	Percentage
Less than 1 h	65	54.60
1 – 2 h	10	8.40
3 – 4 h	5	4.20
4 h and above	4	3.36

Table 2: Librarian internet activity

Activity	No	%
Personal access (e-mail)	81	68.04
Reach out to other libraries	13	10.92
Surffing for materials	56	47.04
To store facts and date	12	10.08
Communicate with other colleagues	16	13.44
Accessibility to bibliographic information	8	6.72
Check for new titles	8	6.72
To locate materials for clients	12	10.08
To access and make available e-books and journals	12	10.08

An overwhelming majority 68 or (81%) respondent indicated they had ICTC connected to the Internet. Only 16 or 19% of the libraries have Internet connectivity. The next question focused on how academic librarians use the Internet. Specifically, the researcher was interested in how much time the librarians spend on the Internet and what they spend their time doing on the Internet. See Table 1:

Table 3:Survey result whether librarians are agree, disagree and not sure about these statement.

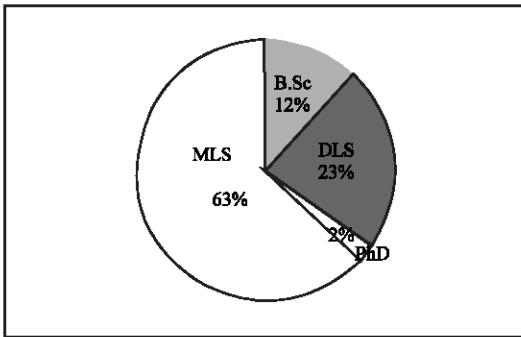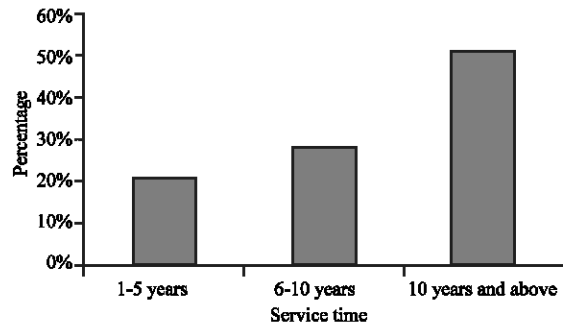| S/No	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
1	Librarians need to embrace the Internet and make it the focus of their profession	61%	23%	16%
2	The Internet has made it easier for the Librarian to provide excellent library services to the patron.	51%	34%	15%
3	People use the Internet as a place for E-mail, chart room, etc. i.e. unrelated to the traditional role of the library.	52%	8%	40%

Fig 1: Pie chart showing demographic data

Fig. 2: The years of service, age and gender

Table 4: Other activities

Activity	NO	%
Created a web page	5	4.20
Updated library's web page	5	4.20
Conducted database search	56	47.04
Download files	10	8.40
Programmed using	2	1.68

As can be seen from Table 1shows, 65 or (54.6%) of those surveyed spend an average of less than one h on the Internet while only 4 or 3.36% of respondents spend 4 h and above on the Internet for one activity or the other.

The next question was on what Librarians spend their time doing on the Internet. Librarians were presented with a list of Internet activities and were asked to indicate whether or not they did that activity.

In Table 2 Librarians were asked to indicate whether they had done the following within the past one year.

The next set of questions focused on how academic librarians felt about the Internet and how it affects what they do. The first question in this section asked the librarians if they were keeping up with the Internet's rapid pace of change.

Perceptions: Do you believe you are keeping up with the Internet's rapid pace of change?

3% respondents indicated they believed they were keeping up-to-date.

86% of the respondents believed they were being left behind and 11% indicated they were not sure.

The most common reasons given by those who indicated they were left behind are:

- No personal computers connected to the internet
- No official computers connected to the Internet
- Lack of skill and knowledge

The next question in this section simply asked whether or not the librarians felt overwhelmed by the amount of information available on the Internet.

- 65% indicated that they do feel overwhelmed.
- 23% indicated that they often do not feel overwhelmed while 12% were not sure. (Fig. 1)

On the question of training, 39% of the respondents indicated that the library had provided them with some kind of basic training on computer and there after, left without a computer to perfect on what they learn.

The internet and the librarian: In this study of the survey, statements were made about Librarians and the Internet. The Librarians are asked to indicate whether they agree, disagree or were not sure. The Table 3 below summarizes the result.

Demographic data: The final set of questions profiled the respondents with regards to education, years of service, age and gender Fig 2.

Gender		
MALE	51	42.84
FEMALE	33	27.72

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this survey was to learn how academic librarians use the Internet and their attitude towards the Internet and its impact in Nigerian Universities. A total of 84 surveys were returned out of a total of 100 representing 84% return rate. Majority of respondents were masters degree holders in Library and Information Science and have served over 10 years in academic libraries.

The study revealed that almost all Nigerian Universities have Information and Communication Technology Centers connected to the Internet. Eighty one Percent those surveyed have ICTCs while the library has 19% connectivity to the Internet. This shows that majority of libraries in Nigeria are yet to embrace the new trend of technology. This collaborate the findings of Blakes[1] that 80% of Nigerian Universities have ICTCs. The staff in the Information and Communication Technology Centres has the required web-portal building skills but do not have the library background knowledge.

The studies also show that majority of librarians spend less than one hour on the Internet in a typical day. They are using it for a myriad of tasks including reaching out to other libraries, surfing, e-mail, store facts and dates, access to bibliographic information, making available e-books and journals, downloading files etc. However, the results indicate that most academic librarians' knowledge of the Internet does not extend beyond the basics of e-mail and web searching. Most of the Librarians stated that they have not created or maintained a web page or done any programming. In this era of simple web authoring tools, librarians should be familiar with simple web page construction. It is an invaluable skill for librarian to have for creating things such as bibliographies, program schedules, etc.

However, this lack of web authoring skills did not prevent an insignificant number of librarians from indicating that they feel they are keeping pace with the Internet. Nevertheless, majority indicated that they feel overwhelmed by the tremendous amount of information available on the web. A majority of those surveyed feel positive toward the Internet, indicating they believe librarians need to embrace the Internet. Majority also believe that the Internet will improve their work environment and also improve their ability to help the public. They see it as a useful tool that can be used to enhance library service but most agreed that providing Internet access should not be the focus of libraries. This finding agree with Internet survey by Library Journal that found the primary reason most people use the library is to borrow a book[10].

The question on the attitude of academic librarians towards the Internet, the study revealed that librarians lack the necessary skills and knowledge and are therefore not very keen. The training they have is just the basic computer appreciation and application. To make matters worst, most of the respondents have no personal or official computers to perfect on what they learn from their training. This agrees with the study of that Nigeria had a total of 750,000 Internet users and 60.82 users per 10,000 inhabitants representing 0.5% of the population. However, there was some concern among the librarians that have Internet connectivity that the library was changing from a place of learning and education to a place for people to use the Internet for web surfing and e-mail and rather than educational pusuits Table 4 This trend was also noted in News Fronts,[10].

Developing a user-friendly website is a task that requires considerable skill and knowledge. Few of the librarians surveyed had the necessary training and a large majority did not have the knowledge needed to build an effective library site. A website is critical to the mission of the library and can be one of the most powerful promotional tools that libraries can use to attract students and faculty to library resources.

CONCLUSION

The current study attempted to shed some light on the topic of the Internet and its use and impact on academic libraries. The Internet and its associated technology change so rapidly that any study on its use and impact becomes outdated almost immediately. It was because of this that the current study attempted to focus more on attitudes and activities of academic librarians with regard to the Internet.

The study revealed that a great majority of academic libraries are not connected to the Internet and that academic librarians are not using the Internet to make materials available for use for students and faculty members. The issue of Internet training was adequately addressed in the current study. The researcher wonders about the kind and depth of Internet training academic librarians are receiving. If the results of this survey are anything to go by, it appears that academic librarians are not receiving adequate or in-depth training. In this "Internet Age" one's skills can literally be outdated overnight. This researcher believes it is important for academic librarians to make every effort to stay just ahead of the Internet learning. In this way, academic librarians can make themselves invaluable to the academic environment. This is why the researcher concludes that in study to adequate training, librarians should avail

themselves of the several web sites and journals available on the Internet. This can only be done if academic libraries in Nigeria are not only automated but also connected to the Internet with computers available on their tables.

Developing a user-friendly website is a task that requires considerable skill and knowledge. Few of the librarians surveyed had the necessary training and a large majority did not have the knowledge needed to build an effective library site. A website is critical to the mission of the library and can be one of the most powerful promotional tools that libraries can use to attract students and faculty to library resources.

It is suggested that Information Communication Technology Centres co-operate with University Libraries in the training of librarians in IT so that they can exploit fully the resources in the web for professional development. For example, many of the new innovations in the information and communications technology are available on the Internet. Learning instructions are prepared and one can easily become adept at the various topics of interest. For example, only recently, the list serve of professional librarians in Nigeria provided information on complete courses and tutorials for more than 120 different vocational and academic disciplines (http://www.free.ed.net) some of these courses included topical issues in library and information science such as operating systems, databases, net work and networking; desk top publishing; word processing; spreadsheets, graphics, productivity and enterprise application and personal computer basics.

There are also many journals that cover various aspects of topical issues that librarians can read and understand. Instead of librarians waiting for special training programmes, there are journals that are freely available on the web. According to Moahi,[11] free journals include: First Monday found at http://www.firstmonday .dk. First Monday provides a peer reviewed journal on Internet – related subjects. Database Management Review at Review at http://www.interscience-wiley.con provides access to a wide variety of journals, including the Journal of the American Society of Information Science. Other resources are the free periodic newsletter that offers tips and tyricks specifically focused on what librarians want to know about Google. Current News of libraries Internet and Education e-news. The source is http://wwwe.sldirectory.com\libsf\resf\current.html. Another key resource related to library automation is http.\\www.librarytechnology.org\ and a lot of others.

This study agree with the findings of Matthew, Battin and Neff,[12] that academic librarians need to posses adequate computer skills by way of cooperating or collaborating with campus computing center in some way to equip the academic librarian face the realities of our information society.

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