

# THE CHALLENGES OF THE USE OF ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES IN MUHAMMADU WABI LIBRARY, FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC, BAUCHI.

**ABDULAZIZ SULE MOHAMMED, ADAMU IBRAHIM & IBRAHIM USMAN**  
*Muhammadu Wabi Library, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi, Bauchi, Nigeria.*

## ABSTRACT

*The paper examines the challenges of the use of Electronic Information Resources in Muhammadu Wabi Library, Federal Polytechnic, Bauchi. Method of data collection was via documentation sources complimented by observation of events situations in the library. The study revealed that the non-academic staff forms a larger percentage of the workforce in the library. Majority of the non- professional staff in the library lacks adequate knowledge of the availability and use of electronic information resources in the library. The study also revealed that majority of the electronic information resources are available in the library but many of which are not in proper condition for use. The lack of commitment by key officials of the institution goes a long way to affect the use of electronic information resources in the polytechnic library. This therefore, necessitated the study to proffer suggestions on possible solutions to these problems for libraries.*

**Keywords:** *Electronic information, Library, Challenges and Use, Resources.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Librarianship in Nigeria is witnessing a paradigm shift and transformation in line with global trend coupled with emerging electronic information environment. Academic libraries in the country are experiencing innovations in the provision of library and information services through application of modern Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). The traditional closed access libraries are shifting towards open access libraries. The open access libraries are shifting towards automated libraries, the automated ones are shifting towards the electronics and the electronics to digital or virtual libraries (Ansari, 2003).

Ehikemanor (1990), stated in Lawal and Ani (2007) that, there are three basic stages in the application of information and communication technologies in libraries. The first stage on the application of ICTs in libraries is the computerization era dated more than 30 years ago when libraries in Nigeria began a shift from manual system of operation to a computer based system for efficiency in acquisition, organization, processing, storage and dissemination of information to the end users. They added thus, computerization was a necessity occasioned by increasing inefficiency of the existing manual system which could no longer cope with increasing demand by the users. Here an electronic system of library ensues where electronic resources like C.D-ROMs are used in providing information via computer networked systems. The collection of information may include still images, text, moving images, sound or

combination of which can be found in a digital form. The benefits of library computerization range from increased productivity, improved quality of tasks/services and resource sharing among others.

The second stage on the application of ICTs in libraries involves provision of access to the internet. Here, Corrieia and Neto (2002), viewed that, the advent of the internet prompt academics and researchers to recognize ICTs as efficient means to share results. While Ani, Edem and Esin (2005), added that, the internet helps collaborate as well as have access to relevant research information. Here a digital library system ensues where a collection of electronic resources can be accessed and used with great ease with the aid of computer technologies and traditional in-house library staff (Okebukola, 2002). This system of library generate, collect, store and organize information in digital form and make it available to defined group of users for searching retrieval and processing via communication networks.

The third stage on the application of ICTs in libraries is the emergence of virtual library system to improve the quality of learning, teaching and research materials in libraries. Here, the system helps to provide access to tools such as database, electronic journals, alerting services, electronic reference tools and quality vetted e-resources (Abubakar, 2012).

The terms electronic library, digital library and virtual library have been used synonymously. However, there exist some basic differences as noted by Tennant(1999), who posit that, an electronic library consist of electronic materials and services such as video tapes , C.D ROMs and other computer devices. While a digital library consist of digital services and materials that are stored, processed and transferred via digital (binary) devices and networks. The virtual library on the other hand consists of both digital and electronic libraries existing virtually.

### **The Problem**

The shift from traditional to digital libraries is not merely a technological evolution, but requires a change in the paradigm by which people access and interacts with information (Yaya and Adeyokun, 2011). The manual system of searching for information and materials in the traditional library does not permit multiple use of the same material by different library users unlike the electronic library system which gives access to a large group of users via computer network system. The daily growth of information according to Utor (1999), brings about problems of location, acquisition, organization and dissemination and also brings about the problem of making easily available to potential users the right kind of information at the right time. Librarians and information workers also lack the necessary policy knowledge and skill relevant to understand concepts and terminologies of multimedia and computers required to plan and implement multimedia resources and relevant information services. There is also the problem of librarians and students not encouraged to learn to apply computer software applications and use other electronic device in their routine search.

The fifth law of library as put by Ranganathan, (1957), states that, a library is a growing organism. This implies changes in all its ramifications from stocking, organization, dissemination to end users as well as other administrative processes. Despite series of attempts by libraries in Nigeria to utilize ICTs, they are yet to transcend beyond the traditional activities such as reference and information services, circulation, inter-library cooperation, photocopying, occasional provision of current awareness services (CAS), selective dissemination of information (SDI) and manual compilation of bibliographies, indexes and abstracts which are done mostly on demand. These services are mainly hard text based with sometimes, few sets of audio-visual (Zakari, 1999). Therefore Libraries should define standard policy implementation strategies to go in-line with changing trend in modern technology for a more realistic way of providing timely, accurate and efficient information management.

### **Review of Literature**

Yaya and Adeyokun, (2011), categorized the different forms of libraries in accordance to the technology used as follows;

1. **Traditional Library:** the collection of the traditional library is mostly print media, manuscripts, books, maps, reference resources, etc; its collections are well organized so as to enhance its accessibility by the library users. Again the traditional library is confined with a physical boundary.
2. **Automated library:** A library with machine-readable catalogue, computerized acquisition, circulation and OPAC are called automated libraries. The holdings of this type of libraries are same as that found in traditional.
3. **Electronic Library:** this is when automated libraries go for Local Area Network (LAN) and CD-ROM networking and start procuring e-journals and other similar kinds of publications. The resources of the e-library are in both print and electronic form. The electronic media are used for storage retrieval and delivery of information.
4. **Digital Library:** This is a later stage of e-library. High speed optical servers are used for LAN (Local Area Network) and the access is over WAN (Wide Area Network) which provides a wide range of internet based service. The holdings of a digital library are in the computer readable form and also act as a point of access to other on-line sources.
5. **Hybrid Library:** the library which works in both electronic or digital and print environment is known as a hybrid library. It is actually a transitional state between the print and digital environment.

### **Electronic Library system**

Electronic library system encompasses the application of equipments such as Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD-ROM), the internet the micro computers and all accompanied devices like scanners, printers, telephone, projectors and flash drive, etc in provision of library information services. The term E-library or Electronic

library has been viewed by many researchers. According to Abubakar, (2012), e-library is an organized and managed collection of information in a variety of media which includes texts, still and moving images, sound, or combinations thereof which can be found in digital form. Mohammed, (2003) and Charity, (2010) also observed that, electronic system of library consists of collections of information materials stored in digital format. They went further to assert that, it is a place where computer and telecommunication technologies make access to a wide range of information resources possible via the internet.

Rowley, (2004) is of the view that an electronic library is characterized by its primary content which are in electronic form. She went further to say that, an electronic library is a managed environment of multimedia materials in digital form designed for the benefits of its user population, structured to facilitate access to its contents and equipped with aids of navigation of the global network. In her conclusion she submitted that, electronic library is a library that is associated with physical space to which people can go for service delivery in electronic form.

## **FINDINGS**

- The study revealed that the non-academic staff forms a larger percentage of the workforce in the library and they are also responsible for executing most operational task or services in the library. This could mean that majority of the non-professional staff in the library lacks adequate knowledge of the availability and use of E-library resources in the library which apparently shows the problem of under trained staff in the use of e-library resources in the library.
- The study also revealed that majority of the e-library resources are available in the library but many of which are not in proper condition for use such as the photocopiers, printers and computers which are required for service provision to users in the library. This relates to problems arising from lack of adequate funds for maintenance of these equipments or a lack of commitment among key officials in the institution on the e-library project. Only the television service can be regarded for its effectiveness in the library for its live TV programs as well as show casement of educative video clips and for illustrational purposes to users in the audio-visual unit of the library. However, the library keeps collection copies of CD-ROMs for project researches concluded by students and lecturers submitted to various departments in the institution for consultation purposes of prospective researchers.
- Lack of commitment by key officials of the institution goes a long way to affect the use of electronic information resources in the polytechnic owing to the available facilities and resources on ground and coupled with the fact that most of these resources only require little or no repairs to make them operational once again

in the library. There are also lack of training facilities and high cost of computer hardware and software etc.

- Finally the finding discovered that there is no standardization in the implementation exercise. This therefore, necessitated the study to proffer suggestions on e-library policy implementation strategy for the library to adopt for an effective library information service in accordance with modern global practice.

### **Conclusion**

Information resources today are being accessed and stored in various media, therefore educational institutions need to acquiring these modern information resources to assist in teaching and learning activities. Electronic information resources ensure easy communication between students and instructors in the areas of teaching and research activities which proves to be more convenient and interesting. As a first step in modern librarianship, it will keep the library abreast with modern trend in library information services. A similar assertion was portrayed by many research writer quoted in this study.

### **Ecommendations**

Our goal as information providers is to ensure maximization of resources towards effective information service provision in the library. Therefore the following recommendations are suggested:

- The professional Librarians and other library staff should embrace changes brought about by ICTs in to the library profession. They should go through the basic computer skills as a pre-requisite prior to the training on implementation of e-library scheme or project.
- Regular e-library training programs should be organized by the library for all staff to improve their proficiency in the use of modern e-library resources in library services.
- The library staff under the audio-visual unit should work alongside the system librarian to attend to problems that may crop up with any electronic information resources or device for a smooth running of the system.
- The setting up of an electronic library entails the following stages as formulated by Fabunmi, Paris and Fabunmi (2007).

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