

CHALLENGES AND ENHANCEMENT STRATEGIES ON THE PROVISION OF ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN UNIVERSITIES IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated challenges and strategies for enhancing the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue state, Nigeria. The study was guided by four research questions. The study adopted descriptive survey research design with a population of 69 academic librarians. The sample size for the study comprised the entire population. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. Data collected was analyzed using frequency count and percentages for research question one while mean and standard deviation was used for research questions 2 and 3. Out of the 69 copies of questionnaire distributed, only 66 was filled correctly and returned for analysis. The finding of the study revealed that, there are different types of electronic information resources provided for academic librarians in universities in Benue state, Nigeria. The study discovered that, there are challenges affecting the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State, Nigeria. Based on these findings, the study recommended among others that, universities in Benue state, Nigeria should invest more on provision of electronic information resources that will be relevant to the research needs of academic librarians. It was then concluded that, universities in Benue state, Nigeria

should apply the strategies in this study so that efficient provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians could be achieved.

Keywords: Provision, Electronic Information Resources, Academic Librarians

Introduction

One of the major functions of a university library is to provide information resources in any format to support users in their teaching and learning and as well as, in carrying out research. This mandate, however, confers special status on university libraries as they are saddled with the responsibility of providing both print resources and electronic information resources to users for research and other academic purposes. Electronic information resources can be defined as information resources that provide access to users in a digital format. They include information resource that consists of computer-controlled contents. They are known as online information resources which cover many resources like digital collections of data, electronic reference books, search engines for full textbooks, among others. Electronic information resources mean e-resources and e-resources are contents that require a computer mediator to access and make use of. Electronic information resource according to Bajpai, Hada and Bajpai (2016) could also be referred to as all the products that the library provides for teaching, learning and research through computer networks. These resources according to the authors include e-books, e-journals, e-newspapers, e-magazines, e-manuscripts, e-theses and e-dissertations, internet/websites, e-maps, e-conference proceedings, e-reports, e-pictures or photographs, e-clippings, e-patents, e-standards databases / indexing and abstracting databases / reference database, CDs/DVDs, internet/Websites among others.

Electronic information resources can also be seen as any resource in which information is stored electronically and accessed through electronic systems and networks. Edem and Egbe (2016) view electronic information resources as the product of information communication technologies and most times provided by libraries and are found relevant to aid academic librarians in their academic activities. Electronic information resources are essential for teaching, learning and research because they disseminate current and emerging information. These resources often communicate information to the reader before publishing in a print format. The importance of electronic information resources in universities today cannot be over emphasized in the current dispensation. Electronic information resources according to Ternenge and Kashimana (2019) have become an important aspect that supports teaching, learning and research in the universities. These authors stated further that, in Nigerian universities including those in Benue state, apart from accessing them for teaching, learning and research, these resources have also become a requirement for all accreditation programmes and even appointment and promotion of academics.

In recent time, academic libraries are fast moving towards information provision from print to electronic resources. This is because most academic libraries today have gained their feet into provision of electronic information resources due to the preference and numerous benefits derived by users from utilizing them. Provision means the act of making something available so that people can use them when in need of them. Provision of electronic information resources refers to the act of making available, electronic information resources by academic libraries in the university. Provision of electronic

information resources involves the process where a library acquires, organize and make digital materials available to its users. Provision of electronic information resources in the libraries creates awareness and improve utilization as users will be able to view resources that have been provided by the library through computer networks.

Academic libraries in Benue state provide electronic information resources due to their importance to their educational programme; and also, their intention to achieve objectives that are in line with the present day global best practices. Electronic information resources are considered essential and part of modern society as its provision in academic libraries in Benue state exposes users to numerous online resources. They play very important role in education and are now recognized as being greatest important to the academic libraries. The present forms of electronic information resources are made up of a range of products that may exist in different formats such as CD-ROM and resources available on the internet such as databases, web pages among others and they provide users with vast resources for their research (Bwalya & Ssebbale, 2017). The authors further stated that information on the web is structured to facilitate browsing by providing access to quality-controlled information resources such as e-journal, e-books among others.

Benue state has four major universities and these universities have increasingly contributed to human resources development in the country over the years. Universities in Benue state have established libraries both faculty/college and departmental libraries to support teaching, learning and research. In order to facilitate provision of information resources, these university libraries sometimes subscribe to internet facilities which are

connected to by users to access electronic information resources. If effectively provided and accessed, electronic information resources will go a long way to enhance library users' research. Therefore, libraries in universities in Benue state, Nigeria should put effort in the provision of electronic information resources as it will go a long way in assisting users to achieve their academic goals. It is against this backdrop that this study intends to examine challenges and strategies for enhancing the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue state, Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Academic libraries today are developing and advancing, both in the application of technologies in the provision of information resources to its users. Electronic information resources are peculiar types of resources provided by academic libraries for teaching, learning and also consulted for research. They are provided by academic libraries also, for study, carry out assignments, projects, communicate, collaborate via internet and social media and prepare for examinations. When effectively provided, electronic information resources enable academic librarians to have access to up-to-date information at the right time and in the right form. They enable them to have access to various and quality information which offer them the opportunity for searching multiple database files per time which has reduced the time spent for information in the print media.

Also, provision of electronic information resources has become one among the important services rendered by academic libraries to assist users in carrying out research for teaching and learning. These resources enable users to retrieve current literature which help them to carry out their academic duties in the universities. Despite the great

importance and potentials which electronic information resources offers for users, the researchers have observed that electronic information resources are not adequately provided for library users in the universities even in Benue state Nigeria due to lots of challenges and this has prompted the need for this study. The researcher has observed that literatures relating to this study are scanty and just few studies have covered some of the variables which this study intend to cover to the best of the knowledge of this researcher and these are the gaps that this study intends to fill. The problem of this study, therefore, is to investigate the challenges and strategies for enhancing the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the types of electronic information resources provided by university libraries for academic librarians in universities in Benue state, Nigeria?
2. What are the challenges affecting the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State, Nigeria?
3. What are the strategies for enhancing the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State, Nigeria?

Literature Review

Researchers in the field of librarianship have carried out different studies on provision of electronic information resources and made various discoveries. For instance, Onuoha, Ifeanyi and Yunisa (2020) carried out a study on availability and utilization of e-resources in university libraries for effective research output by undergraduates of social

studies in South East Nigeria and found out that e-books, e-journals, e-databases, e-magazines, e-serials, e-dissertations and theses/projects, CD-ROMS, Online Public Access Catalogue, Reference Databases, e-images and e-audio visual resources are some of the electronic information resources provided. Ifijeh, Ogbomo and Ifijeh (2018) in their study on utilization of academic library resources for research productivity among lecturers in private universities in south south Nigeria discovered challenges encountered in the utilization of academic library resources to include; time pressure and deadline, student project and thesis supervision, excess work load among others. Oladeji and Adeyeye (2022) in their study on electronic information resources use and research productivity of lecturers in private universities in Oyo state found out that lecturers utilized electronic information resources provided to a high extent. This extent of usage could be the notion and believe that, electronic information resources are timely and easily assessed.

The importance of the provision of electronic information resources in our libraries today is unmeasurable as it has changed the teaching and research habits of library users, created different opportunities for researchers to access and utilize these resources from any part of the world. Solanke (2016) study on influence of user needs and satisfaction on patronage of reference services by undergraduates in selected universities in Osun state, Nigeria suggested strategies like; workshops, seminar and lectures should be organized by university management to train librarians on how to assist users to access various search engines provided and users should learn to use sophisticated databases provided by academic libraries. Provision of electronic information resources through training and

retraining shapes and presents information resources to library users in a way that makes sense to and excites them more than traditional print resources do.

Again, information and communication technology is fast changing the methods of provision of information resources by academic libraries to meet the growing needs of users. Abdulsalami and Arowolo, (2019) conducted a survey on the method of acquisition of library resources in Nigeria institute of transport technology library, Zaria. The study revealed among others that, purchase is one of the major methods for providing electronic information resources in the library. The study further revealed that, lack of financial support, lack of qualified staffs, lack of current materials and lack of space in the library are the major challenges in the provision of electronic information resources in the library. More so, Adepoju, (2021) in his study of sources and methods of acquisition of library resources in university libraries in Nigeria discovered that donation, gift, membership of the organization, exchange, purchase publishers' catalogue, suggestions from users, online search and vendor are the different methods that libraries provide electronic information resources to users. The study also revealed that the types of resources provided for library users are print journal and e-journal, books and e-books, online database, in-house database and audio-visual materials. The finding of the study further revealed that inadequate fund, high cost of library materials, problems of foreign exchange, delay in ordering of library materials, supplier's negative attitude and management's negative attitude inhibits provision of electronic information resources in academic libraries.

The extensive popularity of electronic information resources in education makes it essential for universities to understand and adopt these resources to establish future educational strategies through support and organizing workshop to train and retrain librarians on the provision of electronic information resources and establish policies that will guide the provision of these resources. Prangya and Rabindra (2015) study on access, awareness and use of electronic information resources by research scholars of Berhampur University: a study opine that in the provision of electronic information resources in university libraries, there should be training and retraining of librarians, universities should ensure that internet is subscribed for users for free access, internet should be subsidized and more so, the provision of electronic information resources should focus on helping users. Makori, E.O. (2015) study on selection and acquisition of e-resources in academic libraries showed that, e-journals, CD/DVD and e-books are the available e-resources in the library.

One of the major challenges in the provision of electronic information resources has been the cost of acquiring tools for retrieving electronic information resources and this has over the years affected the running of computers and internet services in university libraries. Ujah and Jacob (2022) in their research on factors influencing selection and acquisition of legal information resources in university law libraries: a case study of university of Jos law library, Jos, Plateau state, Nigeria found out that lack of acquisition policy, high cost of foreign materials, poor quality of locally published materials, poor communication services and poor bibliographic control are some of the challenges encountered in the provision of information resources in the library. Onuoha, Ifeanyi and

Yunisa (2020) in their study revealed that e-books, e-journals, e-databases, e-magazines, e-serials, e-dissertations and theses/projects, CD-ROMS, Online Public Access Catalogue, Reference Databases, e-images and e-audio visual resources are some of the electronic information resources provided in Nigerian universities. The authors in their study further recommended that the National Universities Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) among other educational bodies should be focused towards preparing teachers to acquire appropriate skills in e-resources utilization and that the ministry of education should through seminars, workshops and conferences equip teachers with requisite knowledge, skills and competences on the use of e-resources.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive survey research design with a population of 69 academic librarians from four out of the five universities in Benue state. The sample size comprised the entire population of 69 academic librarians as it was small and manageable for the researchers. This brought the sample size to be 24 academic librarians from Rev. Fr. Moses Orshio Adasu University, Makurdi, 32 academic librarians from Joseph Sarwuan Tarka University, Makurdi, 5 academic librarians from Federal University of Health Science, Otukpo and 8 academic librarians from University of Mkar. The instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire developed by the researchers. Data was collected with the help four research assistants and analyzed using frequency count and percentages for research question one and mean and standard deviation for research questions 2 and 3. Out of the 69 copies of questionnaire distributed, only 66 (95.7%) was filled correctly and returned for analysis.

Results and Discussion

Research Question One: What are the types of electronic information resources provided by university libraries for academic librarians in universities in Benue state, Nigeria?

Table 1: Frequency and percentages of respondents on types of electronic information resources provided by university libraries for academic librarians in universities in Benue state, Nigeria. (n=66)

S/N	Item Statement	Provided		Not Provided		Decision
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
1	Online Open Access Catalogue (OPAC)	50	75.8	16	24.2	P
2	Electronic Journals (e-journals)	61	92.4	5	7.60	P
3	Electronic Books (e-books)	56	84.8	10	15.2	P
4	CD-ROMs	14	21.2	52	78.8	NP
5	Online Database	54	81.8	12	18.2	P
6	AGORA databases	6	9.10	60	90.9	NP
7	Cloud computing	44	66.7	22	33.3	P
8	Bibliographies	34	51.5	32	48.5	P

Key: N = Number of respondents, Freq. = Frequency, % = Percentage. P= Provided, NP= Not Provided

Table 1 shows the frequency and percentages of respondents on types of electronic information resources provided by university libraries for utilization for academic librarians in universities in Benue state, Nigeria. The result revealed Electronic Journals (e-journals) (61, 92.4%), Electronic Books (e-books) (56, 84.8%), Online Database (54, 81.8%), Online Open Access Catalogue (OPAC) (50, 75.8%), Cloud computing (44, 66.7%)

and Bibliographies (34, 51.5%) to be the types of electronic information resources provided by the university library for academic librarians in universities in Benue state, Nigeria. The finding of this study agrees with the study of Bajpai, Hada and Bajpai (2016) who noted that e-books, e-journals, e-newspaper, e-magazine, e-manuscripts, e-theses and e-dissertation, internet/websites, e-maps, e-conference proceedings, among others are the types of electronic information resources that library provides in the university. The finding of this study agrees with Onuoha, Ifeanyi and Yunisa (2020) whose study revealed that e-books, e-journals, e-databases, e-magazines, e-serials, e-dissertations and theses/projects, Online Public Access Catalogue are some of the electronic information resources provided in the Nigerian universities. The finding of this study is in line with Adepoju (2021) who posits that types of electronic information resources provided for library users are print journal and e-journal, books and e-books, online database, in-house database and audio-visual materials.

Research Question Two: What are the challenges affecting the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on the challenges affecting the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State, Nigeria. (n=66)

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
9	Lack of technical know-how among some librarians	3.09	1.29	Agree
10	Non-subscription to online database resources	2.95	1.27	Agree
11	Epileptic Power supply in the library	3.03	1.26	Agree
12	Poor internet Connectivity	2.67	1.35	Agree
13	Inadequate facilities to use EIRs	2.71	1.36	Agree
14	Poor budgetary allocation to the library	3.18	1.21	Agree
15	Lack of acquisition policies in the library	3.17	1.25	Agree
16	Lack of adaptive/assistive technologies on the part of librarians	3.02	1.28	Agree
17	Lack of library orientation on these EIRs in the library	3.08	1.24	Agree

Cluster Mean**2.99****Agree**

Table 2 shows Mean and Standard deviation of respondents on challenges affecting the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State Nigeria. The finding revealed respondents agreed that all items listed are challenges affecting the provision of electronic information resources by academic librarians in universities in Benue State Nigeria as the items had mean ranging from ($\bar{X}$ = 3.18 to 2.71) and standard deviation ranging from (SD = 1.36 to 1.21) respectively. The cluster Mean of ($\bar{X}$ = 2.99) revealed that respondents agreed that items listed are the challenges affecting the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue state Nigeria. The finding of this study is in line with the finding of Abdulsalami and Arowolo, (2019) whose study revealed lack of financial support, lack of qualified staffs, lack of current materials, power outage and lack of space in the library to be the major challenges in the provision of electronic information resources in the library. This study agrees with Adepoju, (2021) whose study revealed that, inadequate fund, high cost of library materials, inadequate facilities, problems of foreign exchange, delay in ordering of library materials, poor budgetary allocation, supplier's negative attitude and management's negative attitude inhibits provision and utilization of electronic information resources in academic libraries.

Research Question Three: What are the strategies for enhancing the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of respondents on strategies for enhancing the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State, Nigeria. (n=66)

S/N	ITEMS	Mean	SD	Decision
18	Training and retraining of librarians on computer knowledge	3.09	1.11	Agree
19	Constant subscription of online database resources	3.11	1.23	Agree
20	Constant power supply	2.73	1.27	Agree
20	Functional internet connectivity	3.32	1.08	Agree
21	Provision of adequate ICTs facilities to use EIRs	3.11	1.20	Agree
22	Improved budgetary allocation	3.42	1.04	Agree
23	Constant review of EIRs acquisition policy	2.45	1.30	Disagree
24	Orientation librarians on usage of EIRs	2.65	1.25	Agree
	Cluster Mean	2.99		Agree

Table 3 shows Mean and Standard deviation of respondents on strategies for enhancing the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State, Nigeria. The finding revealed among others that, Improved budgetary allocation ($\bar{X} = 3.42$, $SD = 1.04$), Functional internet connectivity ($\bar{X} = 3.32$, $SD = 1.08$), Constant subscription of online database resources ($\bar{X} = 3.11$, $SD = 1.23$), Provision of adequate ICTs facilities to use EIRs ($\bar{X} = 3.11$, $SD = 1.20$), Training and retraining of librarians on computer knowledge ($\bar{X} = 3.09$, $SD = 1.11$) are the strategies for enhancing the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State, Nigeria. The cluster Mean of ($\bar{X} = 2.99$) revealed that respondents agreed that items listed are the strategies for enhancing the provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State, Nigeria. The finding of this study agrees with Solanke (2016) study who suggested that workshops, seminar, training and retraining, orientation and lectures should be organized by university management to train lecturers on how to utilize various search engines and lecturers should reduce their browsing workload by using sophisticated queries. The finding of this study agrees with Onuoha, Ifeanyi and Yunisa (2020) who recommended that the National Universities

Commission (NUC), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) among other educational bodies should be focused towards preparing teachers to acquire appropriate skills in e-resources and that the ministry of education should through seminars, workshops and conferences equip teachers with requisite knowledge, skills and competences on the provision of e-resources. The finding of this study is in line with Prangya and Rabindra (2015) who opine that there should be training and retraining of librarians, universities should ensure that internet is subscribed for librarians for free access, internet should be subsidized.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study recommends that:

1. Universities in Benue state, Nigeria should invest more on provision of electronic information resources that will be relevant to the research needs of academic librarians.
2. Universities in Benue state should make it a point of duty to provide enough funds for the acquisition of electronic information resources.
3. The libraries and its administration should create more awareness on the provided electronic information resources that can be accessed by academic librarians in universities in Benue state.

Conclusion

Based on these findings, the study concludes that, university libraries in Benue state provides different electronic information resources to academic librarians. Though, there are

challenges affecting the provision of these electronic information resources but if the strategies in this study are applied, effective provision of electronic information resources for academic librarians in universities in Benue State could be achieved.

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