

PROBLEMS OF ACCESSIBILITY OF E-RESOURCES BY E-LIBRARY USERS IN BENUE STATE UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

It is undoubtedly clear that e-library users encountered problems in accessing electronic resources (E-Resources) as observed for about two-to-three semesters; Benue State University, Makurdi. This work was informed from the need to improve the accessibility of e-library by e-library users for maximum benefits. In view of this analytical method was used and findings were uncovered. Some of the findings include lack of enough computers, access to out-dated computers, which were prone to mal-functions constituting a threat to easy accessibility in reflection to the number of e-library users. The slogan, "network is bad," was a common expression on the lips of e-library users, thus, hampering the effective access to the e-resources. The difficulties associated with accessing librarians who are knowledgeable on ICT by users assistance was also a challenge. The internal service providers sometimes denied users access to information electronically, scuttling the efforts of e-library users that sometimes their efforts ended in futility. Against this notion, recommendations were made as follows: - the appropriate bodies should act when due; the university authorities should ensure that, the subscription bills are paid regularly and on time while the service providers improve their service delivery appropriately.

Keywords: E-Resources, E-Library users

In the previous years, education was largely centered or tied to school, and in a lecture theater, but with the evolution of information and communication technology (ICT), the process of learning, conducting research no longer have to bring students and lecturers at the same time in a lecture hall. In this advanced information technological era, students can learn at a distance, perhaps alone, clicking to any of the service providers of his or her choices. In the event of this tremendous progress in the information resources; the library services are more effective, thus, ensuring quality university education in Nigeria. However, there are dark sides of accessing these e-resources by users, particularly the university students. These dark sides of accessibility constituted a problem for E-library users.

The purpose of the paper is to identify these problems, associated with the use of E-library resources and appraise online information resources with a view of identifying the shortcomings arising from accessing them and proffer strategies to overcome them. It is evident that though there are some wide ranges of resources that can be accessed by e-library users, e.g. e-books, e-journals and databases, their shortcomings varies, yet there are common resemblance of these problems. For instance, e-journals are similar to magazines but the content is checked for its academic quality and they are available online. Others include dictionaries, encyclopedias, biographies, conference papers,

datasets, images and sound, law cases, new sources, theses, and dissertations with wide range of issues negatively affecting their accessibilities by users, (university students).

However, there are some reasons why this article is timely. One of the reasons is that the number of students who use the e-library is growing with a horrifying speed, though amidst these challenges. Since this article is focused on identifying these problems and proffering solutions as appropriate, its usefulness cannot be contested. Another reason why this study is timely is because, the demand for the use of these resources higher than a decade ago, thus, hence the need for an urgent solution to problems associated with its accessibility. For instance one ought to subscribe for any of the resource through online library; using a password, computer user name or with navigating extra links. The online library gives one access to many different e-books, e-journals and databases to assist one in his or her study.

The paper also guides, gives an introduction to the amazing resources available on the online library and outlined, explain some of the problems e-library users encountered in the process of accessibility of e-resources, particularly the university students. As you read through or you progress, you will learn a lot more about the problems, and some workable strategies to overcome the problems as well as conclusion based on the findings and then recommendations.

Clarification of Terms

There are two key concepts or expressions that need to be clarified in the context of this paper. This is because some words or expressions could be misconstrued if they are not limited or restricted to the scope of this work. These expressions include:

E-Resources

Electronic digital resources made it possible for students, learners to have seamless access to any information from anywhere at any time crossing all the geographical boundaries. This is possible only when the resources are available. Umaru-Onuku (2002) opined that electronic resources include online library, e-books, e-journals and database, magazine, dictionary, encyclopedia and so on. In view of Umaru-Onuku's opinion, this paper subscribes to his assertion on e-resource and uses it operationally for this work.

Electronic Library (E-Library)

A library is seen as a place where books and other information materials are kept and made available for readers. According to Ejeh(2003) in Ugbagir, Demekpe and Abele (2016) e-library is the home for all free inquiries where citizens of all races and ages, creed and political interest will have knowledge and truth. E-library is an example of university libraries where information, books articles, etc are posted for public use. Therefore, in another sense, e-library (academic library) serves the library and information needs of the students and staff of the institutions where they are located. So e-library as used here comprises both the audio-visual materials in the transmission of information. The full benefits of these materials is received when the user employs both listening and viewing skills. Resources or materials that are audio-visual in nature include televisions, motion pictures, video films and video discs. Advanced information and communication Technology (ICT) has provided other audio-visual materials such as computer aided compact discs (CD) and video-compact discs (VCD). In simple terms, it is the non-printed materials.

Accessing Wide Range of Information Online Resources

When you are using a machine which is not on the university network (off campus), one will be required to login to access online library resources (such as electronic journals) and database by being navigated to another. The students are expected to enter the university ICT account username and password or use the institutional login, then the university ICT account username and passwords or user's individual resource password as the case may be. In order to use the university electronic library (i.e. electronic resources) and ensure user's off campus that he receives his e-mail correspondence from the library, one need to register for and use his university ICT account. Once he has registered for his university ICT account, most of the library's electronic journals, books and databases can be accessed off campus. These resources are in most cases for use only by university students and staff, however as the university policy stipulates. Usernames and passwords are for personal use only, and must times it will not be passed to anyone else.

However, it is reasonable to understand that, this accessibility is applicable to operational standard university e-libraries. According to Amaakaveen, (2012), from the list of databases and passwords, when searching for electronic resources via the library electronic resources or "my subject" page, the user selects the resources he wish to use, and so he will be prompted to log in using one university ICT account username and password. When searching for electronic resources via the library web pages he will also be prompted to login using the university ICT account username and password.

It is obvious that, some e-resources require one to use a different method for validating who is accessing them. For these resources, one has to confirm that, he or she is from the university. For instance, in the case of Benue State University, the user goes to the search box and then chooses the e-material of his choice. A few resources continue to use individual's resource username and password for both on and off campus access; depending on the individual university. Some resources require that, one has to use a different method for validating who is accessing them. For these resources, the user has to confirm that he is from the university. Enter the name of the university in the search box and then choose the University of his Choice from the list displayed. One is asked or few resources continue to use individual's resource username and password for both on and off campus access. At this point, one will be asked to login. These methods of accessing electronic resources are not the only ones and so the list is not exhaustive. However, these are few out of the various means of accessing electronic resources by electronic library users. It is obvious that, there are problems that are associated with the accessibility irrespective of the means by which one is employing to access the electronic resources. Below are some of these problems that are common when accessing the e-resources.

Problems and Prospects Associated with Accessing E- library By E-library Users

In reacting to the challenges that confronted University e-library users, Ugbagir and Abele recently conducted a short survey explaining how and why students encountered difficulties in accessing e- resources, particularly in the library over time as well as what can be done to manage the odds. However, the apparatus used were not fully put to use by the researchers and the sample size was relatively small; the results speak a lot to what we are seeing across the information industry at the moment, particularly in the university e-libraries. For the purpose of academic continence, there is need to explain the meaning of these concepts; e-resources and e-library again. The e-resources and e-library; what does these really mean? From the operational definition of this concept, electronic

resources include online library, e-books, e-journals, database, magazines, dictionary, and encyclopedia and so on, thus, pointing at a possibility of other resources in sight. On the same vein, e-library is the home for all free inquiries where men of all races and ages, creeds and political interests will have knowledge and truth. Therefore, all the e-resources are housed in a home called e-library and so the roles of library if not clearly defined will alter spontaneously the purpose and the desires of a universality e-library. It is on the bases of this that we saw a manifestation of the lack and clear understanding of the roles and purpose of e-library and information as one of the problems of accessibility to e-resources too. While shifting away from focusing on e-library terminologies to focus on accessibility of knowledge and information, there seems to be many challenges borne along students' efforts to access e-resources. According to Ubannaya (2004) in Ezechi, (2010) it seems that focusing on the terms associated with e-resources will not yield much desired result hence the need for a mild adjustment of our focus challenges associated with students access to e-resources via university e-library.

The challenges of accessing e-resources by university students include the ineffectiveness of an e-librarian to discharge his or her roles effectively. The student's inability to handle research data management tools, demonstrates his challenge of accessibility as well as preserving materials on a digital scale. Another challenge is the growing and diverse spectrum of other users, and nailing down some university e-library policies. The role of development is another as well as digital licensing. The last challenge identified here is the subject-matter expertise.

It is clear that, the library has been a valuable institution for academic purpose as long as pen has been put to paper. However, the library and its role in academic research are no doubts going through a clear transformation in the 21st century. The libraries have long been endless sources of information for students- for centuries. This involves row after row of e-books; both the non-printed and printed books as well as other e-resources. However, the face of libraries is changing as constantly moving towards a digital platform and interest, access is becoming more relevant to students and researchers. The electronic library that is almost replacing the analogue library also carries its fair share of some difficulties associated with accessibility. Here are some of the obstacles being faced by university e-libraries that in turn posed negative influence on the accessibility of e-resources. Making services available to researchers and students; Google is not the answer to everything, the librarian who is proficient in e-library services knows this. However, some students sometimes lack basic knowledge of e-library. As a result, the librarian do not fully absorb the needs and wants of students and researchers so that he can make substantial and engaging differences for the students in accessing online materials. Other challenges that stood prominent among them are as follows.

Handling researches data management tools: - Libraries (including e-library) ought to be a place on campus for data and research management. Librarians need the support of their faculty and administrations to make things happen, In recognition of this need, the librarians keep themselves well-versed in the advancement of data management so that research does not become stale.

Demonstrating your value:- The university libraries are always on the university budget. This means that, month after month, year after year, university libraries have to come up with compelling examples of how valuable their works are. However, according to the American Library Association, research has proven that, there is a connection between students' grade point averages and library material usage. University librarians communicate this to the students to clear their misconceptions, perhaps, misconceptions about the academic value of the e-library. The librarian demonstrates why libraries require more attention and public engagement to maximize the electronic resources.

Preserving materials on a digital scale: There are excellent products available that can help librarians achieve things with the biggest collection. The collections are almost uninterested to the students' needs, since the needs of Nigerian students may not be exactly the same in another country. This becomes a problem when the collections are not averaged in the data scale professionally. It is therefore clear that, software continued with a librarian's expertise as the way of future regards to users' interface and access of academic data. The problems of a growing and diverse society: it is probably noticed that already as the 21st century underwent a tremendous and major shift in information technology in general innovations that impacted students of all ages. On any given day, a librarian might have to help e-library user, in this case, (university students) from accessing e-resources from different sources at different instances. In the 21st century library, Umar (2012) in Ugbagir and Abele, (2016) expressed that, the workload of the librarian might be a bit overwhelming when he is trying to assist those who are familiar with traditional library services as compared with younger patrons who are more familiar with technical-driven library software.

Nailing down library policies: - this is another problem that threatened the easy accessibility of users by e-library users. With the increased usage of online tools, there are many questions that one might need to address. One might ask if the university should be purchasing e-books alongside traditional print sources or as many modern academic research centers have been discouraged from printing the hard copies of book, will there be any need for purchasing text books at all by the library? This is just one example of the question university library administrators should answer. Satisfying answer to such question and other related questions can help the staff and the administrators pinpoint the direction university library should move forward to.

Digital licensing: A times, this model can be complex and take a good amount of research on one's part. Although every academic research facility is different, university and research news states that; patron-driven acquisition of e-books is slated to become a norm, which means that digital licensing agreements should become more sustainable and easier to understand.

Subject matter expertise: - with so much information pouring into libraries at a fast pace, academic institutions need to take an active role in the management of libraries. There have already been great studies taken on a nation scale, such as the digital public library of America that was spearheaded by Harvard University to document digital collections of achieves museums and libraries in the other part of the world. However, it appears that, these same efforts need to be done on a micro-scale if universities want to keep with a subject matter expertise.

Becoming familiar with a wide range of digital content: - this is a problem when libraries are not familiar with the wide range of digital content. By clearly seen what kinds of articles, published works and e-books are used most by students and researches, librarians can fully digest what types of content they need to become familiar with in a global digital world and still providing high quality resources.

With university libraries, the challenges of accessing e-resources by e-library users are culminating into a service problem yet the digital licensing and research tools are shaping the way that librarians can provide quality content to students and researchers. It is strongly believed that, free access or trouble-free access to information is a right and that access to information is crucial to the health of individuals and communities everywhere. From the immemorial, the mission of libraries has been to select, acquire, process, organize and discriminate knowledge to actual and potential users. While it might be easy to plan for the actual or present users, is not an easy task to plan and tackle the problems associated with accessing of e-resources even in the face of the available prospects in sight.

According to Birru (1993)in Amaakaven(2012), relevant information must be provided as needed to the various categories of users who include policymakers , planners, professionals, research workers, technicians, local workers etc so that they can accomplish their respective responsibilities effectively to their countries. These responsibilities are well known and accepted by librarians, library administrators and heads of institutions and governments.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are therefore offered to overcome the problems associated with accessing e-resources by university e-library users.

- Incorporation of e-library user-education as a compulsory course embodied with reasonable knowledge on electronic and digital contents.
- Establishing of more e-library and information science with more emphasis on computer studies and the bases for browsing the internet as well as drastic review of the existing syllabus to meet the needs of the users (i.e. Students). This must be in line with the societal needs as well as the need of the profession.
- Organize refresher course for librarians to familiarize themselves with the current digital contents and the needs of the e-library.
- Librarians should maintain the new existing policies, sustained them and be part of the policy formulation.
- Appointment of library administrators with the required experience and the right disposition to leadership should be prioritized.
- Establishment of favorable relationship with the university authorities and government of the day in order to improve the blending of libraries as well as ICT application.
- Cooperation with facilities to find out on-going research activities so that relevant literature and services will be prepared in anticipation of needs.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, it can be concluded that, accessing e-resources posed a problem to e-library users, yet there are prospects, it is glaring that evidently there are some e-resources that are accessible but accessing these resource by the e-library constituted a problem, capable of undermining the purpose , the value and use of e-library in education . Google is important in accessing e-resources as established in this work but it is also clear that the manner of handling research data management tools too value as well.

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