

Electronic Information Resources Sharing in University Libraries in South East Nigeria

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Abstract

The study is on electronic information resources sharing in university libraries in in south-east. The survey design was adopted. Data were gathered through questionnaire. Population of study comprised librarians working in the ICT/e-library unit of university libraries in south-east Nigeria. A total of 45 (93.8%) questionnaire were retrieved and analyzed using descriptive statistics. Multimedia resources and CD-ROMs are the major electronic resources university libraries in south-east shared with other libraries. CD-ROMs remains the main approach that libraries in the south-east adopt in sharing electronic information resources. Findings further reveals that there are several opportunities opened to university libraries for sharing of electronic information resources. The major challenges affecting functional electronic resources sharing are escalating cost of connectivity and attitude of heads of libraries towards e-resources sharing. Training and re-training of library staff, providing alternative sources for power supply, development of strong e-resources sharing policy, provision of strong internet access for libraries, etc, were identified as strategies that can be adopted for effective electronic information resource sharing. Library management and heads of university libraries should be proactive when engaging in electronic information resource sharing.

Keywords: *electronic information, e-resources sharing, university libraries, south-east Nigeria, south-south, Nigeria*

1.0 Introduction

Electronic information resources are gradually becoming a prominent feature of contemporary university libraries and not integrating it into library and information services provided in universities is nothing short of driving behind the clock of technology and development. Library electronic resources consist of all resources in electronic form in the university libraries collections (Umunnakwe, Benson & Onyam, 2020). Electronic resource is digitized information, facilitated by computers, networks, network connectivity, electricity, other peripheral components and most importantly human beings. It comes in different formats including text, videos, audio, maps, graphics tables, pictures, e.t.c. (Kwafoa, Anhwere & Manu, 2019). Baskara (2017) defined an electronic resource as a resource which requires computer access or any electronic product that delivers a collection of data refer to full text bases, electronic journals, image collection other multimedia products and numerical, graphical or time based, as a commercially available title that has been published with an aim to being marketed.

In the new dispensation of information service delivery, contemporary libraries as part of parent organizations are reconsidering and discovering different ways of repositioning themselves in the academic setting in view of higher expectation of their various stakeholders, and the necessity of become learning and research centers to support a wide array of educational initiatives. As rightly pointed out by Aina (2013), “as librarians and information specialists, there is need for library and information science professionals to be updated and instructed on the emerging concepts, technologies and strategies that will enhance library information service delivery to our numerous users. Moreover, technologies have become an essential and indispensable tool for sharing information resources.

Resource sharing incorporates all activities that originate from formal or informal commitment among a collective of libraries to share data, collections, infrastructure, and human resources for the benefit of their users and to realize economies of scale. Resource sharing is basically aimed at promoting free flow of information among libraries and the users of information (Chisita & Fombad, 2019; Kasalu & Ojiambo, 2015). For an individual library, the participation in resource sharing activities can help it play a greater role in academic and society through information exchanges and services co-operation among libraries. E-resources sharing allow the librarian to deliver enhanced services to user community (Baskara, 2017).

Resource sharing takes a lot of efforts and involves a lot of critical factors, which must be fully considered before embarking on (Aina, 2013). Nevertheless, to meet the ever-increasing demands from users of information resources in this digital age, libraries must as a matter of necessity engage in functional and sustainable information resources sharing initiatives. As predicted by Etim (2006), the rapid pace of development in the field of information technology coupled with the advent of networked information services has called for a total review of African universities resource sharing approach, in this age of digital divide. Resource sharing activities therefore are very essential to the existence of any library world over, in as much as that library want to meet the endless demand of their patron community for accessing, information, resources and services effectively. Undeniably, the proliferation of digital technologies has strengthened the capacity of academic libraries to share resources irrespective of time (Chisita & Fombad, 2019). Electronic resource sharing is the means of sharing library collections, facilities, and human resources among academic and research libraries (Antroi, Ankrah & Frimpong, 2020). It is in realization of the role of technologies in information resource sharing that this paper seeks to empirically evaluate electronic information resources sharing in university libraries in south east Nigeria.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

Generally the study aimed at investigating electronic information resources sharing in university libraries in the south east Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. identify the electronic resources university libraries share with other libraries;
2. determine the approaches university libraries adopt in sharing e-resources with other libraries;
3. ascertain the opportunities associated with electronic resource sharing in Nigerian university libraries;
4. determine the challenges affecting functional electronic resource sharing in Nigerian university libraries; and
5. establish the strategies that can be adopted for effective sharing of electronic resources in university libraries

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated in line with the objectives of the study

1. What are the electronic resources your library share with other libraries?

2. What are the approaches does your library adopt in sharing e-resources with other libraries?
3. What are the opportunities associated with electronic resource sharing in Nigerian university libraries?
4. What are the challenges affecting functional electronic resource sharing in Nigerian university libraries?
5. What are the strategies that can be adopted for effective sharing of electronic resources?

2.0 Literature Review

E-resources are useful for librarians as well as each and every users of the society who are starving to get a variety of information through the globe (Baskara, 2017). Electronic information resources help to expand access, increase usability and establish new ways for students to use information to be more productive in their academic activities (Kwafoa, Anhwere & Manu, 2019). According to Aina (2013), the modern approaches of resource sharing include provision of internet facilities, electronic mall, and provision of e-library, teleconference and video conferencing, office automation. Akintunde (2003) as cited in Aina (2013) notes that electronic library approach for resource sharing is becoming a common request among academic and research institutions. In line with this, libraries are responding to this request by attempting to make text and image of name of interesting materials available to a wider virtual and audience.

Umunnakwe, Benson and Onyam (2020) revealed that librarians working in the e-library unit acknowledge the various opportunities opened to libraries and they are: promoting of library and information services, reduction in the cost of disseminating information resources improvement on resources collection and quality of service delivery building of positive images of the library science profession etc.

According to Aina (2013), electronic resources can only be accessed via computer; thus implies that if a library is to render e-resource service, it must have computer facilities and the infrastructure to support such. These include consistent electricity, our conditioned rooms/halls, computer literate staff and library users, maintenance culture, fund for subscription, etc. However, e-Library approaches for resources sharing in this modern time are not insurmountable for the determining libraries even through problem of adopting ICT are multifarious in Nigerian libraries (Aina, 2013). According to Umunnakwe, Benson and Onyam (2020), university libraries faced

several challenges that affect functional electronic resources sharing; the greatest challenges to electronic resource sharing is lack of knowledge about benefits of e-resource sharing and indifferent attitude of librarians toward e- resources sharing initiatives.

Umunnakwe, Benson and Onyam (2020) further affirmed that the challenges affecting functional e-resource sharing are majorly inadequate knowledge of benefits of resources sharing, indifferent attitude of heads of libraries towards e-resources sharing, non-existence of e- resources sharing policy (ESP) and unavailability of network/computer facilities among others. Nevertheless, Kasalu and Ojiambo (2015), affirmed there is willingness by international organizations/universities to share information resources with universities in developing countries thus improving library collections and value of information resources available to both staff and students.

3.0 Research Methodology

The descriptive survey design was used in this study. A rating scale was used for data collection. The population of study comprised of librarians working in e-library/ICT unit of different universities libraries (both federal and state-owned) in south east Nigeria. A sample size of forty-eight (48) was used for the study. The census enumeration sampling measure techniques was adopted and used to involve the whole population (48) for the study. The participating institutions include Abia State University, Uturu; Enugu State University Library, Enugu; Federal University of Technology Library, Owerri; Imo State University Library, Owerri; Nnamdi Azikiwe University Library, Awka; Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike and University of Nigeria, Nsukka. A total of forty-five (45) instruments were retrieved back and used for the study. The descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis while results were presented in tables. Responses to item statements were weighted as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4; Agree (A) = 3; Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1

4.0 Results and Discussion of Findings

The results of data analyzed with respect to the study are hereby presented as thus:

Research Question One: What are the electronic resources your library share with other libraries?

Table 1: Electronic resources library share with other libraries

Descriptive Statistics				
S/N ITEMS	N=45	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
1. Internet Facilities		2.4444	.86748	Disagreed
2. Multimedia Resources		2.7333	1.28629	Agreed
3. CD-ROMs/DVDs;		2.6000	1.28629	Agreed
4. E-Conference Papers / Proceedings		2.3333	.82572	Disagreed
5. Online database		1.8889	1.09175	Disagreed
6. E-books		1.1333	.34378	Disagreed
7. E-journals		2.1778	1.17336	Disagreed
8. Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD);		1.7778	1.08479	Disagreed
9. E-newspapers/E-magazines		1.8889	1.09175	Disagreed
10. Portable document files (PDF)		1.2889	.45837	Disagreed
11. E-seminar papers;		1.6889	1.14460	Disagreed
12. E-pamphlets		1.1778	.38665	Disagreed
13. Other Portable Document Files (PDF)		2.1778	1.17336	Disagreed
Grand Mean		1.94	0.93	Disagreed

Thus, aggregate mean score of $1.94 > 2.5$ showed that the respondents disagreed that electronic resources available in libraries under study are shared with other libraries. The findings indicate that, multimedia resources and CD-ROMs/DVDs are the major electronic resources that university libraries surveyed share with other libraries.

Research Question 2: Which of these approaches does your library adopt in sharing e-resources with other libraries?

Table 2: Approaches libraries adopt in sharing e-resources with other libraries

Descriptive Statistics				
S/N ITEMS	N=45	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
14. Electronic mail;		1.711	1.1000	Disagreed
15. Post / Courier service;		1.8889	1.09175	Disagreed
16. Website URL		1.3333	.60302	Disagreed
17. Blogs;		1.6667	1.10782	Disagreed
18. Social media platforms		1.2444	.60886	Disagreed
19. Network		2.1778	1.17336	Disagreed
20. Wide Area Network (LAN)		1.7778	1.08479	Disagreed
21. Flash drive		1.5111	.50553	Disagreed
22. CD-ROMs		3.4889	1.16037	Agreed
Grand Mean		1.866	.93	Disagreed

Thus aggregate mean score of $1.866 < 2.5$ showed that respondent disagreed that the above approaches are adopted in sharing e-resources with other libraries. Only CD-ROMs was agreed upon as approach university libraries surveyed adopt in sharing e-resources with other libraries.

Research Question 3: What are the opportunities associated with electronic resource sharing in Nigerian university libraries?

Table 3: Opportunities associated with electronic resource sharing in Nigerian university libraries

Descriptive Statistics				
S/N ITEMS	N=45	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
23. It helps to promote library and information services		1.2889	.45837	Disagreed
24. It lowers the cost of disseminating information		2.6889	1.14460	Agreed
25. It helps libraries to improve on their resources collection;		1.1778	.38665	Disagreed
26. It helps to advance the profession of Library and Information Science		2.6778	1.17336	Agreed
27. It facilitates quick and ready access to information;		2.711	1.1000	Agreed
28. building positive image of the library profession;		2.8889	1.09175	Agreed
29. It helps to meet the needs of library patrons faster;		1.3333	.60302	Disagreed
30. Libraries can provide patrons with more current and relevant resources to meet their needs;		2.6667	1.10782	Agreed

31. Enable users to have access to better library and information services;		2.6444	.60886	Agreed
Grand Mean		2.23	.852	Disagreed

Thus, aggregate mean score of $2.23 < 2.5$ showed that the respondents disagreed that there are opportunities associated with electronic resource sharing in Nigerian university libraries. However, respondents agreed that electronic resource sharing lowers the cost of disseminating information, helps to advance the profession and facilitates quick and ready access to information amongst other

Research Question 4: What are the challenges affecting functional electronic resource sharing in Nigerian university libraries?

Table 4: Challenges affecting functional electronic resource sharing in Nigerian university libraries

S/N ITEMS	Descriptive Statistics			
	N=45	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark
32. Network/computer system failure;		1.2889	.45837	Disagreed
33. Unavailability of communication facilities;		1.6889	1.14460	Disagreed
34. High costs of information resources discourages libraries from participating in e-resource sharing;		1.1778	.38665	Disagreed
35. Inadequate knowledge of benefits of resources sharing;		2.1778	1.17336	Disagreed
36. Inadequate security of resources;		1.711	1.1000	Disagreed
37. Epileptic power supplies in university libraries;		1.8889	1.09175	Disagreed
38. Lack of internet connectivity;		1.3333	.60302	Disagreed
39. Inadequate funding for electronic resource management;		1.6667	1.10782	Disagreed
40. Low bandwidth of connectivity;		1.2444	.60886	Disagreed
41. Escalating cost of connectivity;		2.7333	1.28629	Agreed
42. Attitude of heads of libraries towards e-resources sharing		2.6000	1.28629	Agreed
43. Non-existence of resources sharing policy;		2.3333	.82572	Disagreed
44. Uncooperative attitude of sister libraries;		1.8889	1.09175	Disagreed
45. Uncooperative attitude of parent body;		1.1333	.34378	Disagreed
46. Inadequate staff that are ICT compliant		2.1778	1.17336	Disagreed
47. Lack of ICT skills among users to utilize the shared resources;		1.7778	1.08479	Disagreed
Grand Mean		1.80	.922	Disagreed

Thus, aggregate mean score of $1.88 < 2.50$ showed that respondents disagreed that there are challenges affecting functional electronic resource sharing in Nigerian university libraries.

Nevertheless, escalating cost of connectivity and attitude of heads of libraries towards e-resources sharing are the major challenges affecting functional electronic resource sharing in Nigerian university libraries.

Research Question 5: What are the strategies that can be adopted for effective sharing of electronic resources?

Table 5: Strategies that can be adopted for effective sharing of electronic resources

Descriptive Statistics					
S/N ITEMS	N=45	Mean	Std. Deviation	Remark	
48. Provision of efficient resource sharing systems;		2.1778	1.17336	Disagreed	
49. Provision of consistent electricity supply		1.7778	1.08479	Disagreed	
50. Training and retraining of library staff		2.7111	.50553	Agreed	
51. Provision for alternative electricity inverter and generating set in case of power outage;		3.4889	1.16037	Agreed	
52. Development of strong e-resource sharing policy		2.5556	.81340	Agreed	
53. Provision of strong Internet access for librarians		2.5333	1.05744	Agreed	
54. Creating awareness on e-resources sharing		2.6444	.60886	Agreed	
55. Increased bandwidth in institutions		2.7778	1.17336	Agreed	
Grand Mean		2.58	.9885	Agreed	

Thus, aggregate mean score of $2.58 > 2.5$ showed that respondents agreed that there are strategies that can be adopted for effective sharing of electronic resources.

5.0 Discussion of Findings

It is clear from the research and from literature reviewed that multimedia resource and CD-ROM/DVDs are the major electronic resources shared with other libraries. It was further revealed that CD-ROMs is the major approach libraries in the south-east adopt in sharing information resources with other libraries. This in contrast to the findings of Aina (2013) that approaches to resources sharing includes provision of Internet facilities, provision of e-library, teleconference and video conferencing. Although, that most university libraries are not fully engaged in electronic information resources sharing does not negate the fact that there are opportunities associated with electronic resources sharing in Nigerian university libraries such as helping to promote library and information services, lowering the cost of disseminating information, advancing the profession of library and information science, facilitating of quick and ready access to information, building of positive image of the library as well as enabling users to have access to better library and information services. This is in line with the findings Umunnakwe, Benson and Onyam (2020), that librarians working in the e-library unit acknowledge the various opportunities opened to libraries.

The major challenges affecting functional electronic resources sharing in Nigerian university libraries as revealed in this study is escalating cost of connectivity and attitude of heads of libraries towards e-resources sharing. This further validates the submission of Aina (2013) that the problems of adopting ICT are multifarious in Nigerian libraries. It also corroborates the discovery of Umunnakwe, Benson and Onyam (2020) that indifferent attitude of librarians towards e-resource sharing initiatives is a challenge to e-resource sharing.

Nevertheless, in spite of the overabundance of challenges limiting e-resources sharing, provision of alternative electricity, training and re-training of library staff, development of e-resources sharing policy, provision of strong internet access for librarians are strategies that can be adopted for effective sharing of electronic resources conclusion.

6.0 Conclusion and Recommendation

The revolution of information and communication technologies has led to changes in the approach of information resources provision and sharing. It is interesting to affirm that like conventional information resources, electronic information resources can be shared with sister libraries and this will promote resources availability in university libraries.

The study explored electronic information resources sharing in university libraries in south-east Nigeria which can only be possible with availability of smart technologies, the findings revealed that majority of university libraries are not fully engaged in electronic resources sharing while CD-ROMs/DVDs and multimedia remains the major e-resources be shared and the only approach adopted is the CD-ROM, the findings further revealed that electronic information resources sharing in university libraries are not without challenges. Contemporary libraries are engaged in the provision of electronic information resources to the users and this is an offshoot of the penetrating influence of ICT on library service delivery.

Based on the finding of the study, the research recommends that:

- i. Librarians in university libraries should be sensitized and encouraged to share their electronic resources.
- ii. Heads of parent institutions should increase their support for library development and ensuring that university libraries are connected to the internet at all times.
- iii. Library managers in universities should ensure that library staff are trained and re-trained on the application of information and communication technologies to library services delivery.
- iv. Libraries in South-East should form a network/consortium through which e-resources can be shared easily with minimal restrictions.
- v. Heads of university libraries should ensure that provisions made for alternative electricity inverter/generating set in case of power outage as well as ensuring that strong internet connectivity and access is prioritized in university libraries.

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