

**Electronic Information Resources Utilisation by Student of Rhema University Library****Ozioma Prudent OGBUAGU (CLN)**

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**Abstract**

*The paper examined the Electronic Information Resources Utilisation by Students of Rhema University Library. The study highlights the various electronic resources utilised by the students, challenges in the utilisation of electronic information resources and the strategies that can be adopted to enhance proper utilisation of electronic information resources. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of all registered student users of Rhema University library. Instruments deployed for data collection were availability check list and questionnaire. Data collected was analysed using frequency counts, simple percentage and mean value. Findings revealed that Rhema students are conversant with, and utilise, the following electronic information resources: e- journal, e-book, e- manuscripts. E-map, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), e-magazine, e- thesis, e-bibliographic database and Web Online Public Access Catalogue (WebOPAC), whereas e- reference, e- research report, electronic mails, e-data archives and CD-ROM were not utilised. The study observed that Lack of ICT skills, difficulty in locating EIRs, frequency of systems breakdown, as challenges of e-resources utilisation. The study recommended that Rhema University Library management should ensure frequent maintenance of*

*computer systems, recruitment of librarians with skills on deployment and management of electronic information resources among other things with conclusion that searching strategies for EIRs be included in university curriculum.*

**Keywords:** Information Resources, Utilisation, Libraries and Rhema University

## **Introduction**

In today's digital era, library automation and the internet had revolutionized information access and library operations around the globe. Provision of information and associated services is the primary roles of a library which supports the educational, recreation, cultural, economic and technological endeavours of individuals in their respective communities thus the central mission of a library is to collect, organise, preserve and provide access to knowledge and information to satisfy the information needs of her patrons. These roles and mission when extended to a university community forms the fulcrum of the responsibilities of a university library. Electronic information resources promote efficiency in dissemination of information for education, recreation, and research purposes in the universities. An electronic information resource which is same as electronic resources or e-resources are information stored in electronic format either in a computer or computer related facilities such as CD-ROMs, digital libraries or the internet. According to Tariq and Zia (2014), the world has become the world of technology and students are well aware about the use of electronic information resources hence the preference for World Wide Web resources for different educational and research purposes. Haridasan and Khan (2009) see electronic information resources (EIRs) as "resources in which information is stored electronically and which are accessible through electronic systems and network.

Similarly, Ogbuagu (2016) posited that (EIRs) are vital tools that aid research processes. Libraries especially university libraries all over the world are investing heavily in (EIRs). The availability of information resources enhances and supports learning and research in no small measure. With (EIRs), users can access different online databases, e-journals, e-books, CD-ROMS, e-thesis and dissertations among others, through computer and other electronic devices. Ankrah and Atuase, (2018) listed the various types and forms of e-resources in academic libraries to include; e-databases, e-journals, e-data archives, e-manuscript, e-maps, e-books, e-magazines, e-thesis, WWW, e-newspapers, e-research reports, and e-bibliographic databases. The major benefit of electronic resources in the university library besides ease of access to the needed information is remote access by community of users in offices/laboratories or homes without paying physical visit to the library.

Rhema University, Nigeria is a private University approved and licensed by the Federal Government of Nigeria and regulated by the National Universities Commission (NUC) located in the city of Aba, Abia State, and is founded and funded by the Living Word Ministries in 2009. The viewpoint of the university is hinged on the philosophical dictum that "Knowledge is Power" and to achieve this viewpoint, the university pursues the highest standards of teaching, research and community service while at the same time provide a balanced education for the acquisition of knowledge, entrepreneurial skills and moral principles. Rhema University library has e-resources available for use. The patronage of the library consists of undergraduate and postgraduate students, independent researchers as well as staff. Huge difference exists between the provision of electronic information resources by university libraries and the access, retrieval as well as utilisation of the provided electronic information resources users.

Whereas accessing electronic information resources offers opportunities to obtain accurate and timely literature, observation shows that there is low usage of e-resources in Rhema University library. This is evident from library statistics, register records and from information obtained verbally. The University Library also conducts workshops and seminars on availability of e-resources; however, reality checks show the rate of their use was low due to lack of awareness, lack of subject coverage, slow downloading speed and lack of time. This affects their research work in no small measure. In fact, most current articles online are hardly found in paper-based materials (Ogbuagu, 2016). It is in view of this low rate of utilisation that this research is conducted in order to advocate for maximum utilisation.

### **Purpose of the study**

The general objective of the study is to determine the electronic information resources utilised by student of Rhema University library while the specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Identify the available electronic information resources utilised by the student of Rhema university library.
- ii. Ascertain the challenges in the utilisation of electronic information resources.
- iii. Suggest strategies that can be adopted to enhance the utilisation of electronic information resources.

### **Research questions**

- i. What are the available electronic information resources in Rhema University Library?
- ii. What are the challenges encountered by patrons of Rhema University Library when consulting electronic information resources?
- iii. What strategies can be adopted to improve the utilisation of electronic information resources?

### **Literature Review**

Literature is reviewed focusing on the research objectives and these constitute: electronic resources, information resources, electronic information resources in academic libraries, attitudes towards e-resources usage and global strategies adopted for e-resources utilisation.

### **Electronic resources**

Electronic resources are resources that can be accessed electronically via the internet or digital media. The examples include among others the following: websites, online databases, e-journals, e-books, electronic integrating resources and physical carriers in all formats, whether free or fee-based, required to support research in the subject covered, and may be audio, visual, and/or text files.

According to Shuling (2007), electronic information has gradually become a major resource in every university library. The emergence of electronic information resources, simply referred to as electronic resources, has tremendously transformed information handling and management in academic environments and in university libraries in particular. Ellis and Oldman (2005) opine that electronic information resources are more of a tool to assist in conducting research, a way of scanning a lot of materials quickly. The act of providing access to electronic resources by the university library to the patrons is referred to as electronic information services. Information resources can be defined as resources that are available and can be accessed electronically through such computer networked facilities as online library catalogues, the internet and the world Wide

Web, digital libraries and archives, government portals and websites, CD-ROM databases, online academic databases, such as medicine or commercial databases such as LexisNexis (Ekwelem, Okafor & Ukwoma, 2009).

Yu and Breivold (2008) defined electronic information resource management as the practices used by librarians to keep track of important information about electronic information resources, especially internet-based resources such as electronic journals, databases, and electronic books. According to Iroaganachi and Izuagbe (2018), such EIRs include: e-journals, e-books, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), Web Public Access Catalogue (WebPAC), CD-ROM, electronic mails, e-Data archives, e-Manuscripts. E-maps, e-magazines, e-thesis, e-newspaper, e-Research reports, E-bibliographic databases, e-Reference sources and other education sources that is valuable to scholars and researches.

In another development, Ani, Nugulube and Onyancha (2015) conducted a study on “perceived effect of accessibility and utilisation of electronic information resources on productivity of academic staff in selected Nigeria universities”. The study explored the perceived effect of accessibility and utilisation of electronic information resources on research productivity at Nigerian universities. Based on the finding, it was recommended that effective development of digital libraries in Nigerian Universities would ameliorate the problems of accessibility and utilisation of electronic resources by academic staff in research. Furthermore, the Nigerian university libraries should develop an electronic collection development policy to enhance equitable access and use of electronic resources. E-resources as a product of Information Communication Technologies are seen by Ternenge and Kashimana (2019) as invaluable research tools for students in higher institution of learning.

### **Utilisation of e-resources in academic library**

The word utilisation is derived from the word “utilise” which simply means to make use of something for a particular purpose. Utilisation therefore is the extent to which available resources in an organization are made use of by people who need them. Uhegbu (2007) asserts that “information utilisation is the actual putting into appropriate use of acquired information. Utilisation of information differs from person to person and from one corporate organization to the other according to their information needs and other socioeconomic imperatives. It is important to note that when information resources are available and is not properly utilise, it amounts to waste of resources. In the view of Mashayabo (2017), writing on utilisation of library resources, noted that the utilisation of library resources is an ingredient that led to success in an academic pursuit but added that there are some problems that mar the full usage of resources, and these problems are; lack of resources, presence of unqualified manpower, lack of relevant library materials, irregular use of library materials by users as a result of awareness as well as irregular power supply.

A study carried out by Gakibayo, Ikoja-Odongo, and Okello-Obura (2013) at Mbrara University Library Uganda about the use of electronic information resources by the students. Results were tabulated and it shows that a large number of respondents were aware with the basic use of computer and needs training in ICT applications to be familiar with the full use of technology in utilizing electronic resources, some of the respondents use electronic sources available in the library while some of them did not use it and more over suggestions was taken for the improvement of electronic resource use in the university.

The study of Makgahlela and Bopape (2014) on the use of e-resources by the postgraduate students at the Delta State University, Nigeria, revealed that, although the postgraduate students

had access to e-resources, lack of searching skills, erratic power supply, inadequate space in the library and low bandwidth subscription proved to inhibit their utilisation thereof. The researchers recommended proactive measures like the collaboration between faculties and faculty librarians to provide orientation and training and to create more awareness.

Adeniran (2013) conducted a study on usage of electronic resources by undergraduates at the Redeemer's university, Nigeria "The study was conducted to examine the usage of electronic resources by undergraduates at Redeemer's university library Mowe, Nigeria. Recommendations were made based on the findings; the management should ensure that the acquisition of information and communication technology skills is acknowledged as one of the key learning objectives for its students so that students will be fully equipped to cope with the information intensive world. To this end more practical courses on information, communication technology should be inculcated into the curriculum. The library management should organise periodic training on the use of electronic resources for the undergraduate students. The utilisation of e-resources in academic library in Nigeria assists the librarians in performing a dual role: one to the patrons towards their information needs in the school, while the second is manifested in the daily routine work within the library environment where librarians work as seen in the two service units Readers services and technical services sections of the library.

### **Challenges of utilisation of electronic information resources**

The utilisation of EIRs is not without challenges. Several challenges were reported to have associated with the utilisation electronic information resources in the library. The greatest of the challenges students encounter according to Ugwu and Orsu (2017), include lack of browsing skills, low internet bandwidth and insufficient ICT infrastructure, lack of internet access at home, absence of online assignments, lack of motivation to use online information and majority of students not having personal laptops. Agyekum and Ossom (2015: 13) studied the extent of e-resources usage amongst academic staff and faculty members of Kumasi Polytechnic, Ghana. Investigations showed that although more than twenty databases comprising three thousand e-journals were subscribed through the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Ghana, utilisation was hampered by access complications, slow Internet connectivity, frequent power outages and lack of search skills. Pricing, licensing, digital rights management, design platforms and e-book format have been discovered to hamper e-book workflow at the University of Nevada, Reno (Beisler & Kurt, 2012:97).

Uzoagba (2019) identifies lack of good infrastructure in terms of epileptic power supply in Nigeria or low current which might result in damaging ICT equipment in the libraries. In the view of Ukoha (2011), he discovered that lack of adequate bandwidth size (for effective internet connectivity) and appropriate anti-virus and other necessary software in academic libraries poses serious threat to ICT use in the library. Further, Okiki and Asiru (2011) conducted a survey study in Nigeria. The study was to determine the use of electronic information sources by postgraduate students in Nigeria. Results showed that large number of respondents use electronic information sources daily and they are motivated to use electronic information sources for their research projects. According to tabulated results slow connection is a major problem faced by the respondents. Ibrahim (2004) conducted a survey in United Arab Emirates (UAE), studying use and user perceptions of electronic resources in UAE University. According to the results the frequency of usage of e-resources was unexpectedly low because of language barriers, lack of computer literacy and lack of time.

Finally, findings revealed by Otolu, Saibakumo and Urhibo (2018) in their study on impact of ICT skills on the use of electronic resources by undergraduate students in Nigerian University Libraries show that delay in downloading files, poor network and difficulty of accessing some websites are the major challenges encountered by respondents on use of e-resources.

## Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Three specific objectives guided the study. The population of the study comprised of all registered users of Rhema University library totalling 70 respondents. Therefore, the sample size for the study is made up of 70 library users. Two major instruments used for data collection were: Availability Check List and researcher's developed questionnaire based on four-point Likert scale. Data collected with the instruments is analysed using frequency counts, simple percentage and mean value; and presented in tables.

## Results and Discussion of Findings

The results and findings from the study are presented as follows:

**Research Question 1:** What are the available electronic information resources in Rhema University Library?

**Table 1: Available Electronic Information Resources utilised by students of Rhema University Library**

S/N	E-Resources	Available	Not Available
1.	E-Journal	√	
2.	E-Book	√	
3.	E- Manuscript	√	
4.	E-Map	√	
5.	Public Access Catalogue (OPAC),	√	
6.	E-Magazines	√	
7.	E-Thesis	√	
8.	E-Newspaper,	√	
9.	E-Bibliographic Databases	√	
10.	Web Public Access Catalogue (WebPAC),	√	
11.	E-Reference		-
12.	E-Research reports		-
13.	Electronic Mails		-
14.	E-Data Archives		-
15.	CD-ROM,		-

*Source: Field Survey, 2022*

Table 1 indicates that electronic information resources most utilised by Rhema students are available in databases while e- reference, e- research report, electronic mails, e-data archives and CD-ROM were not available. This implies that Rhema Students are conversant with, and utilises the following electronic information resources such as: e- journals, e-books, e-manuscripts, e-maps, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), e-magazines, e-thesis, e-bibliographic databases and Web Online Public Access Catalogue (WebPAC). These available information resources are



consistent with the work of Ankrah & Atuase, (2018) listing of various types and forms of e-resources in academic libraries. The list includes; e-databases, e-journals, e-data archives, e-manuscript, e-maps, e-books, e-magazines, e-thesis, WWW, e-newspapers, e-research reports, and e-bibliographic databases.

**Research Question 2:** What are the challenges encountered by patrons of Rhema University Library when consulting electronic information resources?

**Table 2: Challenges of using e-resources**

S/N	Items	S A	A	D	S D	M
1.	Lack of ICT skill	18	15	2	-	3.4
2.	Technological constraints	15	10	3	7	3.4
3.	Frequent breaking down of systems	18	13	4	-	3.4
4.	EIRs is difficult to Locate	14	10	9	2	3.0
5.	Slow internet connectivity	8	5	18	4	2.5
6.	Student poor orientation	9	-	20	6	2.3
7.	Uncooperative attitude of library staff	4	5	10	16	1.9
8.	Epileptic power supply	-	2	17	16	1.6
9.	Lack of personal laptops	3	-	15	17	1.6

Table 2 presents results on challenges of using e-resources. From the table, respondents accepted item statements one to five (1-5) as challenges of e-resources utilisation which comprises Lack of ICT skills, technological constraints and frequent break down of systems are all challenges of using e-resources with a mean score of 3.4% respectively while difficulty in locating EIRs is 3.0% and, slow internet connectivity is also seen as a challenge with 2.5% mean score while rejecting Student's poor orientation with a mean score of 2.3%; uncooperative attitude of library staff having a mean score of 1.9%; epileptic power supply scoring a mean score of 1.6% and finally, lack of personal laptops with a mean score 1.6% as challenges of using e-resources.

In this regard, the greatest challenges students encounter in utilising electronic information resources according to Ugwu and Orsu (2017), includes lack of browsing skills, low internet bandwidth and insufficient ICT infrastructure, lack of internet access at home, absence of online assignments, lack of motivation to use online information and majority of students not having personal laptops. Hence, when the above challenges of electronic information resources are not addressed it hinders effective use of electronic information resources by students. In another development, Ternenge and Kashimana (2019) noted that the extent of utilisation of electronic information resources for research by students indicate inadequate computers in the library, poor internet connectivity, limited subscribed titles, power outages, difficulty to access and use, lack of relevant e-resources in various disciplines were the problems encountered by students while accessing and using electronic information resources for research in Francis Sulemanu Idachaba Library University of Agriculture, Makurdi. Therefore, it is established that use of e-resources is laced with encumbrances.

**Research Question 3:** What strategies can be adopted to improve the utilisation of electronic information resources?

**Table 3: Strategies to be adopted to enhance the utilisation of electronic information resources**

S/N	Items	S A	A	D	S D	M
1.	Frequent maintenance of computer system	23	8	2	2	3.4
2.	Inclusion of search strategies for EIRs in University curriculum	18	16	1	-	3.4
3.	Recruitment of Technological experts	15	18	1	1	3.3
4.	Teaching of ICT skill	20	5	3	7	3.1
5.	Increased bandwidth for fast downloading	10	20	3	2	3.1
6.	Library staff to be more proactive in assisting students	11	8	15	1	2.8
7.	Constant orientation of student	6	5	13	11	2.2
8.	Provision of steady power supply	3	9	14	10	2.2
9.	Owning of personal laptops to be made mandatory	6	12	-	17	2.2

Table 3 revealed that registered student users of Rhema university library indicated that frequent maintenance of computer system and inclusion of search strategies for EIRs in university curriculum have a mean score of 3.4% respectively while recruitment of technological experts adopted 3.3%, also seen as strategy, to be adopted to enhance the utilisation of electronic information resources. Teaching of ICT skills; increased bandwidth for fast downloading has a means score of 3.1% respectively. Library staff to be more proactive in assisting students have a mean score of 2.8%. Meanwhile, constant orientation of students; provision of steady power supply; and ownership of personal laptops to be made mandatory in the item statements are not seen as strategies to be adopted to enhance the utilisation of electronic information resources with a mean score of 2.2 respectively.

These findings are in alignment with the findings of Okiki & Asiru (2011) who carried out research on the “use of electronic information resources by postgraduate students”. In their findings they recommended that universities should provide computer literacy programme to cater for low skill users and provision of uninterrupted power supply. Additionally, Murugusen (2020) opined that various promotion strategies can be used to inform users about a range of available services and e-resources in academic libraries thus promoting access to, and use of electronic information resources.

### Recommendations

The study hereby makes following recommendations based on discoveries made:

1. Rhema University Library management should ensure that acquisition of information and communication technology (ICT) skills is acknowledged as one of the key learning objectives for the university students in order to be fully equipped and cope with information intensive world.
2. The University Library management should organise periodic training on the use of electronic resources for her registered students; and other registered users.



3. Librarians of the university should sensitise students on the usefulness of electronic information resources.

### **Conclusion**

Electronic information resources (EIRs) in university libraries are very essential and as such should be made information available at all times. It is important for Rhema University students to understand that utilisation of electronic resources will improve the quality of their papers, allow them spend less time in the research phase and more time in the writing phase. Electronic resources equally provide users with avalanche of resources in diverse areas, and more current resources are made available from a plethora of sources. The use of electronic information resources in higher institution cannot be over emphasised.

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