



Research Paper

Information communication technology as tool for improving library services in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The advancement of science and technology has made a tremendous improvement in changing almost all walks of life, especially in Information technology (ICT hereafter), which has been acknowledged in all nooks and crannies of the globe. Therefore, this study is of the view that information communication technology will improve library services in Nigeria. The study tends to synergise information communication technology and library collection in the ICT era, determine what is digital library is, its purpose, as well as advantages. It will also consider the need for Nigerian libraries to adopt ICT and assess the benefit of ICT to Nigeria library. Thereafter, conclusion along with suggestions on how Nigerian libraries can improve their services through the use of ICT will be presented.

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries which were considered only as the storehouses of knowledge have got a new outlook in the modern Information Communication Technology era. The traditional libraries are limited by storage space; the activities which were carried out manually in libraries with so much pain and strain are being carried out smoothly with the help of ICT with greater effectiveness. Library organization, administration and other technical processing have become easier. The services rendered with the help of ICT are faster and more effective. Moreover, Vinitha et al. (2006) asserted that "it creates faith and confidence about the products and services of an organization among its customers." The importance of information and communication technology (ICT) in Nigerian libraries is no longer an issue in debate; rather, it is how Nigerian libraries can ensure their continuous derivation of the benefits from the new opportunities afforded by ICT.

In order to bridge the gap that exists between the traditional and modern methods of information storage, retrieval and provision in the digital age, the use of ICT in

library operations must be seriously emphasized. Ideally, ICT is expected to have a major impact on the management, structure, and other operations of Nigerian libraries. As first step to bridging the gap, Nigerian librarians must accept one basic fact that ICT are enablers of innovation in the managerial and operational processes in libraries (Nkanu and Okon, 2010). That is, the use of the technologies of modern computer-based information systems is a major force that has the capabilities of transforming the traditional methods used in cataloguing and classification, indexing, abstracting etc. It is expected that all technologies that process, store and communicate data and information in libraries should be managed as integrated systems and be used as access tools for the libraries resources.

Purpose of the study

This study investigated the information communication

technology as tool for improving library services in Nigeria.

Research questions

- i) What are the impacts of ICT on library services in Nigeria?
- ii) How can ICT be used to improve library services in Nigeria?

Scope of the study

The scope of the study covered ten public and academic libraries in north central State of Nigeria.

Library collections in the ICT era

Traditionally, the boundaries of collections have been determined by the ownership of tangible objects. Most of the decisions made about collections, acquisitions and accessioning, cataloguing, preservation and access have been made by the local institutions that house and/or own them. This makes sense for collections comprising discrete physical objects, such as books, maps and serials. For collections of digital objects, however, the notions of collection and collection maintenance need to change because ownership and physical proximity to collections are no longer prerequisites for access to materials.

Digital library

A digital library is a library consisting of digital materials and services. Digital materials are items stored, processed and transferred via digital (binary) devices and networks. Digital services are services (such as reference assistance) that are delivered digitally over computer networks. Technically, at least copies of items in a digital collection can be accessed from anywhere, provided the right combination of hardware and software is available.

It maintains all, or substantial parts, of its collection in computer-accessible form as alternative, supplements, or complement to the conventional printed and microform materials that currently dominate library collections (Kanthimathi et al., 2006).

Purpose of a digital library

The purpose of a digital library is to facilitate access to electronic information, print material, and render other library services to ensure that the information needs of the user community are met, regardless of their location. It enables libraries to deliver valuable information that

already exists within library walls electronically to patrons outside those walls, to create new digital resources locally, and to integrate local digital resources with remote ones (Kanthimathi et al., 2006). The number of people accessing digital collections through the <http://www.also> shows explosive rates of growth.

Advantages of digital library

1. Digital libraries are essential to enable more people to create and use vast amounts of distributed information and to contribute to the quality and quantity available via the web and future access frameworks.
2. Digital libraries remain closely linked to advances in high performance computing and networking and both contribute to and validate these technologies.

The need for Nigerian libraries to adopt ICT

Advances in ICT and globalization have enabled resource sharing and exchange of information for various purposes worldwide. This development has placed libraries in a most advantageous position that will enable them to serve the information needs of the global village. This brings into focus the concept of digitization as a means of globalization. However, it has become necessary for Nigerian libraries to make their intellectual collections available for global access via the internet in order to fit into the new direction.

According to Aina (2003), the availability of full internet access in any Nigerian library will facilitate online access to the world of information. Electronic information services will enhance the formation of a library consortium. Once the network is in place, cooperating libraries will have access to the catalogues of participating libraries through Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC). The consortium will ensure that each library has access to the OPACs of libraries, CD-ROM databases, electronic journals, full-text databases, reference resources and other important documents. The use of computers for example, in the circulation section of the library helps to eliminate some of the repetitive nature of manual work such as charging and discharging of books, writing of overdue notice, reservation of books and compilation of accession lists of new arrivals, recording of fines and keeping statistics of use of the libraries resources. With use of the computer, these jobs are performed faster, neater and with a high level of accuracy. The boredom resulting from repetition is also eliminated.

According to Ikpahindi (2007), libraries are duty bound to acquire, preserve and disseminate information from whatever sources. Hence, there is need for such sources of information to be kept, preserved and made available in a more convenient and accessible format. Over the years, Nigerian libraries have been burdened with the problems of

space, accessibility and preservation.

Advances in digitalization in the 21st century has made it imperative for Nigerian libraries to develop ways on how to manage access to materials available in electronic formats and effectively share them, since the digital age has provided a platform on which they have to share their resources. ICTs have offered Nigerian libraries more efficient ways of acquiring, organizing, storing and disseminating or transmitting information. New information technologies, which are integral components in the shaping of information systems, have the potential of changing the status quo of libraries (Mosuro, 2000). In recent times, the traditional methods of providing information services is changing, and also, the performance of library tasks is undergoing a major change process. Libraries are thus being transformed from book centre to information centre institutions, and emphasis is shifting from book collection and storage to access and provision of electronic information services (Atinmo, 2000).

Population and sampling technique

The sample population of the study consisted of ten academic and public libraries in the north central of Nigeria. A sample size of 5 professional librarians were taken from each library which is 50.

Instrumentation

The main method employed to collect information was questionnaire which was designed as follows: Section one contained five items which was designed to provide information about the bio data of the respondents, while Section two contained twenty close ended questions designed to collect information from the sample size about availability and utilization of the ICT, how to improve the use of the ICT, problems encountered in the use of ICT and how those problems can be solved. The questionnaire was designed to generate yes or no responses.

Validation and reliability of instrument

The questionnaire was self-designed by the researcher and validated. The questionnaire was validated through a pre-test conducted at Stella Obasanjo Library, Lokoja and Kogi state polytechnic library with a view to identify omission of vital information. Reliability of the questionnaire was ensured through the test-retest method. The reliability coefficient was put at 0.96. The questionnaire were administered and collected personally by the researcher. Efforts were made by the researcher to enlighten the professional librarians about the purpose of the questionnaire yet some librarians were not willing to

complete the questionnaire. The responses of the librarians to the questionnaire items were analyzed through the use of simple percentages.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

The results of the study and analysis are presented based on the research questions:

Research question 1: Do Nigerian libraries have adequate ICT facilities?

The finding in Table 1 revealed that most libraries in Nigeria do not have adequate ICT facilities. Seventy five (75) percent of the sampled libraries do not have adequate ICT facilities. Twenty five (25) percent have adequate ICT facilities.

Research question 2: Do your library have high speed internet connectivity?

It can be observed from Table 2 that most libraries have good internet connectivity. It is surprising to note that some libraries are not connected to internet. While others that are connected, the speed is very slow. A total of 65% have good internet connectivity. Thirty five percent (35%) either have slow internet or are not connected at all.

Research question 3: Is your library subscribe to online resources?

The finding on Table 3 revealed that most academic libraries in Nigeria subscribe to various online resources, but most public libraries are yet. Fifty five (55) percent of the sampled libraries subscribed to online resources, while Forty five (45) percent are yet to.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study show that most libraries in Nigeria do not have adequate ICT facilities, it is surprising to note that some libraries are yet to connect to internet, and most connected libraries are facing the challenge of slow network and irregular power supply. Most of the public libraries are not subscribed to online resources, and budget allocated to library in Nigeria is very low.

Conclusion

This study inquired into the impact of ICT on Nigeria libraries and its services. The need for ICT facilities in Nigeria libraries to help improve their performance is inevitable in the digital age. In addition, ICT is seen as a

Table 1: Availability of adequate ICT facilities in Nigerian libraries.

Alternatives	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	25	25
No	75	75
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's field work 2015.

Table 2: High speed internet connectivity.

Alternatives	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	65
No	35	35
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's field work 2015.

Table 3: Online resources subscription.

Alternatives	Response	Percentage (%)
Yes	55	55
No	45	45
Total	100	100

Source: Researcher's field work 2015.

process that boost the functions and operations of Nigerian libraries in the act of providing information services to its users. It is hoped, that library administrators will look into the pertinent issues raised in this write-up, in order to make library services more effective and efficient to its users.

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of this study, it is hereby recommended that:

i) Administrators of Nigerian libraries should collaborate with their parent institutions to re-order their priorities through a major policy shift in order to provide full internet connectivity in their libraries. By this, Nigerian libraries will be able to face squarely the challenges of adequate and effective way of providing library and information services that characterized the digital divide in Nigerian libraries.

ii) Implementation of ICT facilities for libraries in Nigeria should receive adequate support from their parent body.

iii) Whatever the technological advantages are, if the staff is not capable or properly trained to handle technical and professional work, the whole process go in vain. Therefore, staffs should be trained regarding concept and issues involved in ICT because it is important to provide

competent service to the users.

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