Librarians In Use Of Internet By University Libraries In The South-South Zone, Nigeria.

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Abstract: - Purpose- The paper seeks to investigate the use of internet by librarians in university libraries in the South-South zone of Nigeria. **Design/Methodology/Approach-** The paper uses a survey research approach to carry out this investigation. **Findings-** The investigation reveals that the librarians make optimal use of a few of the numerous information resources on the internet. The librarians' level of internet use skills is only moderate although majority of them derive several benefits from the internet. However, several factors such as inadequate funds, poor electric power supply, inadequate localized software etc militate against their effective use of the internet. **Practical implication-** Generally, librarians, university authorities, system, administrators and ICT policy formulators will find this paper useful because it enlightens them about the fact that only a scanty use is made of the numerous internet information resources available and the librarians' level of skills for internet use is moderate. Even though the internet is beneficial to the librarians, several factors impede its effective use. **Originality-** The study offers new insights in the area of internet use by librarians in Nigerian universities. Because the study revealed that, though information professionals, librarians make scanty use of the numerous internet sources, coupled with their moderate skill in internet use, means that, it differs from other studies.

Key words: - Use, Internet, Librarians, University, Libraries, Nigeria.

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Introduction

The imperativeness of information to humans across the world cannot be over-emphasized. It is one thing for information to be available and another for people to have quick and easy access to them. The universal technology that facilitates such access is the internet. The internet can simply be defined as the network of networks of computers. It is therefore an international network of information networks. The internet is a self-governing global network that joins together millions of individuals, commercial and nonprofit organizations. It is changing our lives in remarkable ways, becoming more central to librarians and libraries with each passing year. It widens its hold on librarians' everyday routines-from delivering documents and purchasing books to searching database as well as delivering distance education [1] It is one thing for the internet to be regarded as very vital to human existence, and another to ask if people (especially librarians) make optimal use of the technology especially in this age of globalization. This paper therefore investigates the use of internet by librarians in university libraries in the South-South zone of Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:
1) What are the internet resources mostly used by the librarians in the university libraries in South-South zone of Nigeria?
2) What are the librarians' levels of skill for internet use?
3) What are the reasons why the librarians make use of the internet?
4) What are the factors militating against the use of the internet by the librarians?

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Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of the study are to:
1) Know the internet resources mostly used by the librarians in the university libraries in the South-South zone of Nigeria.
2) Find out the librarians' level of skill for internet use.
3) Identify the reasons why the librarians make use of the internet.
4) Identify the factors militating against the use of the internet by the librarians.

Review of Related Literature

A wide range of literature abounds about the internet and its use. Information is a *sine-qua-non* for every form of development-academically, socially, economically, politically, religiously, etc. For enterprises, communities and individuals to successfully participate in the global economic activities, ICTs gradually become more crucial [2]. The internet is an important modern technology hence, it is universally accepted and used. The e-mail, newsgroup, search engines, telemedicine, teleconferencing, etc are some of the wide range of facilities and services on the internet[3]. These facilities and services are really essential to academics in their bid to access and manage information, geared towards communicating knowledge to people. [4]. The importance of internet use skills cannot be over-emphasized. This is because for a user to be effective in the use of ICTs generally, he requires basic skills. Lack of technological skills therefore impedes learning outcomes [5]. Acquisition of ICT skills by people brings about improved standard of living in both individuals and their communities while lack of skills brings about ineffective or skeletal use [6,7]. Also, when librarians posses skills in technology applications in the new information age, they will be more knowledgeable, creative, productive, forward looking, more focused and more competitive [8]. While some academic librarians in Nigeria are not computer literate, others have just a low level of computer skills [9] The importance of internet use cannot be over-emphasized. This is true because several people have politically, socially, economically, educationally, etc benefited from the internet world wide [10]. The web has transformed the entire research process which many librarians have benefited

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from [11]. Furthermore, access to information in data bases worldwide, is provided by the internet [12]. Despite the imperativeness of the internet to librarians in particular and people in general, there are several impediments to its use. For instance, government policy, financial status and geographical location have been identified as factors to consider [13]. On a sad note, there is the issue of the global disparities in accessing the internet, culminating in a digital divide between technological haves and have-nots [14]. Hence Africa still lags behind because the numerous opportunities which the internet made available, have not reached majority of the African population. [15]. It has been stipulated that the extension of infrastructure for the use of the internet in developing countries had generally been much slower than in economically rich parts of the world [16]. Nigeraia is not left out of this obvious predicament because she is enjoying only a sprinkling of global information [17]

Methodology

The study used the descriptive survey design. The population was made up of 138 librarians drawn from the 11 university libraries (6 state owned universities and 5 federal owned universities in the South-South zone of Nigeria. The librarians either had access to the internet facilities owned by their university libraries or those provided by their university ICT centres. This criterion was used because, even though all the government university libraries in the South-South zone have not been automated, the librarians have access to the ICT centres of their universities. It is important to note at this juncture that because the study population is relatively small hence manageable, the researcher decided to use the entire number of 138 respondents. This implies that there was no need to draw a sample from the study population. Also, the population figures were arrived at during the preliminary investigations by the researcher. While some of the libraries were personally visited by him, information were gathered from the others through phone calls and e-mail. The study population is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Study Population

s/n	University Libraries	Ownership Status	No. of Librarians
1	Akwa-Ibom State University Library, Obiokpa.	State	8
2	Ambrose Ali University Library, Ekpoma.	State	10
3	Cross River State University of Technology Library, Calabar.	State	8
4	Delta State University, Abraka	State	22
5	Niger Delta University Library, Yenegoa.	State	12
6	University of Science and Technology Library, Nkpolu.	State	12
7	Federal University of Petroleum Resources Library, Effurun.	Federal	3
8	John Haris Library, University of Benin, Benin City.	Federal	16
9	University of Calabar Library, Calabar.	Federal	21
10	University of Port-Harcourt Library, Rivers State.	Federal	16
11	University of Uyo Library, Uyo.	Federal	10
	Total		**138**

Data Analysis and Findings

In this segment of the study, the data related to the investigation were analysed in relation to the four research questions that were earlier asked. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as simple frequency counts and percentages. This is because of the fact that the required data are descriptive in nature. Out of the 138 copies of the questionnaire that were administered to the respondents, 127, which represents 92.00% of the total number, were completed by them. Of this number, 124 copies were found usable for the study.

Internet Resources Mostly Used by the Librarians

The analysis of data regarding this issue is shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Internet Resources Mostly Used by the Librarians.

Internet Resources	Frequency	Percentage %
E-mail.	105	84.68
E-conferencing.	31	25.00
E-shopping.	20	16.13
E-magazine.	51	41.13
E-books.	80	64.52
E-encyclopedia.	42	33.87
E-dictionaries.	38	30.65
Search engines.	60	48.39
Chatting.	53	42.74
Full text data bases.	49	39.52
Online newspapers.	70	56.45
Open access electronic journals.	81	65.32
Web directories.	59	47.58
Newsgroup.	40	32.26
Telnet.	28	22.58
Online technical report.	25	20.16
Online multimedia collections.	27	21.77
Overseea job search.	24	19.35
FTP (File Transfer Protocol).	21	16.94
Fellowship search.	26	20.97
FAO (Frequently Asked Questions).	60	48.39
OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue).	71	57.26
Sporting news.	30	24.19
Mailing list.	19	15.32
Gopher.	10	8.06
Gambling.	13	10.48
Weblogs.	7	5.65
Visiting Pornographic sites.	2	1.61

Table 2 shows that the librarians mostly use five out of the 28 listed internet resources. Out of this number, e-mail – 105 (84.68%) ranked highest. This was followed by open access electronic journals – 81 ((65.32%), e-books- 80 (64.52%), OPAC- 71 (57.26%) and online newspapers – 70 (56.45%). In a related study, it was found that a high level use of e-mail for sending and receiving information, was observed among the users of three public university libraries in Ghana.[18]

The librarians level of skills for internet use.
The analysis of data pertaining to this issue is depicted by Table 3:

Table 3: The Librarians Level of Skills for Internet Use

Level of Internet Use Skill	Frequency	Percentage %
Very High	10	8.06
High	15	12.10
Moderate	79	63.71
Low	20	16.13
Total	**124**	**100.00**

It is clear from Table 3 that majority of the respondents – 79 (63.71%) have a moderate level of skills for internet use. This implies that majority of the librarians cannot make optimal use of the internet thus the tendency for them to still heavily rely on the manual print media while rendering information services to their clientele.

The reasons why the librarians make use of the internet.
Table 4 shows the analysis of data concerning this issue.

Table 4: The Reasons Why the Librarians Make Use of the Internet.

Reasons For Using the Internet	Frequency	Percentage %
To send and receive mails electronically.	111	89.52
To use search engines to access information generally.	65	52.42
To chat with friends and colleagues.	56	45.16
To access online newspapers.	73	58.87
To access electronic journals.	85	68.55
To search for job opportunities.	30	24.19
To search for fellowship opportunities.	31	25.00
To access OPAC.	73	58.87
To access sporting news.	33	26.61
To participate in professional conferences electronically.	40	32.26
To buy and sell electronically.	24	19.35
To access books electronically.	84	67.74
To access news magazines electronically.	54	43.55
To gamble electronically.	10	8.06
To access pornographic sites for amusement.	3	2.42
To download library software.	64	51.61
To ask salient questions	68	54.84

As shown by Table 4, a high majority of the respondents – 111 (89.52%) indicated that they use the internet for sending and receiving mails electronically from people. This was followed by accessing electronic journals – 85 (68.55%), accessing electronic books – 84 (67.74%), accessing OPAC – 73 (58.87%), asking salient questions – 68 (54.84%), accessing search engines – 65 (52.42%), downloading library software – 64 (51.61%) etc. The multifarious benefits of the internet cannot be over-emphasized. This is due to the fact that it is a rich, multifaceted complex, ever-changing textual environment accessible 24 hours in a day, seven days per week and 365 days per annum.[19]

Factors Militating Against the Use of the Internet by the Librarians

The analysis of data pertaining to this issue is shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Factors Militating Against the Use of the Internet

Factors Militating Against the use of the Internet	Frequency			
	Yes	(%)	No	(%)
Inadequate funding of Nigerian universities.	121	(97.58)	3	(2.42)
Poor electric power supply.	110	(88.71)	14	(11.29)
Inadequate ICT skills.	90	(72.58)	34	(27.42)
Inadequate ICT training.	85	(68.55)	39	(31.45)
Lack of maintenance culture.	77	(62.10)	47	(37.90)
Mismanagement of resources.	91	(73.39)	33	(26.61)
Lack of automation.	88	(70.97)	36	(29.03)
High import duties on ICT equipments.	70	(56.45)	54	(43.55)
Negative attitude to ICTs.	51	(41.13)	73	(58.87)
Lack of workable policy on ICT use.	100	(80.65)	24	(19.35)
Insufficient localized software.	105	(84.68)	19	(15.32)
Absence of network among Nigerian university libraries.	86	(69.35)	38	(30.65)
Frequent changes in technology.	45	(36.29)	79	(63.71)
Political instability.	90	(72.58)	34	(27.42)

As depicted by Table 5, a high majority of the respondents i.e. 121 (97.58%) stated that inadequate funds is a major problem militating against the use of the internet by the librarians. This is followed by poor electric power supply – 110 (88.71%), inadequate localized software – 105 (84.68%), lack of workable policy on ICT use – 100 (80.65%), political instability – 90 (72.58%), inadequate ICT skills – 90 (72.58%), etc. The problem of inadequacy of funds has largely affected the availability and sustenance of technological infrastructure in Nigeria. This has been regarded as the main impediments to the use of electronic information resources. There is a strong relationship between inadequate funds and technology infrastructure.[20]

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that even though there are several information resources on the internet, the librarians make optimal use of only a few of them. This is not surprising because majority of them have a moderate level of internet use skill. This notwithstanding, majority of the librarians derive benefits from the use of the internet. However, several factors such as inadequate funds, poor electric power supply, inadequate localized software, government's lack of workable policy on ICT use, political instability, inadequate ICT skills etc, have been identified as militating against effective use of the internet by the librarians.The following recommendations have been proffered by the author in order for the problems to be solved: The government should increase the budgetary allocations to the university libraries in Nigeria. A large portion of the budget should be used for funding library automation. Also human, material and financial resources should be sought by the management of the universities from philanthropic organizations, at local and international levels. Furthermore, all the funds accruing to the libraries should be prudently utilized by the management of the university libraries. Power generation and distribution should urgently be improved upon by the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN). In order to argument the services of PHCN, the libraries should look inward by acquiring state of the art power generating machines. Manpower training programmes for software design should be organized by the National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) of Nigeria (the body responsible for facilitating ICT growth for development). This will enable ICT practitioners in Nigeria to design localized software instead of overdependence on foreign ones. The federal government of Nigeria should come out with a workable and enduring policy on ICT use. The policy should play a regulatory role for IC T based projects in Nigeria. Stringent measures should be introduced to deal with erring ICT practitioners who fail to adhere to the policy. The management of the various universities in Nigeria should ensure that librarians participate in a wide range of ICT training programmes aimed at beefing up their internet use skills. In addition to the capacity building progrtammes on ICT organized by the Education Tax Fund (ETF) and National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA), the management of the universities should laise with the federal government to set up more bodies on ICT training. Also, ICT curricula in Nigerian universities should be enhanced to be in line with the internationally acclaimed state of the art ICT facilities and practices. The federal government of

Nigeria should put in place result oriented palliative measures aimed at cushioning the effect of the economic crunch biting on Nigerians. Efforts should be intensified aimed at curbing the menace of political, economic and religious crises that have plagued Nigeria in recent times. This measure will help to bring about a conducive atmosphere that will ensure effective use of ICTs in the country.

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