

INFORMATION SOURCING IN AN AUTOMATED ACADEMIC LIBRARY

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - Information seeking is a fundamental human process closely related to learning and problem solving, thus the information sourcing characteristics of users of the Kenneth Dike Library, University of Ibadan is examined with a view to evaluating their use of modern Information and Communication Technology (ICT) facilities provided. Use patterns, user satisfaction with the ICT facilities, and user preference of manual and electronic facilities provided are evaluated. **Methodology** - Descriptive survey research to appraise the adequacy of modern ICT in the library was carried out. Questionnaire, interview and participatory observation methods were used. **Findings** - The results show that majority of the users (81%) prefer the new ICT facilities to the manual, even though they encounter difficulties in use. Lack of constant power supply, limited access to online resources, lack of adequate user and staff training and non-creation of awareness for the ICT facilities is identified as some of the problems. The CD-ROM and the Internet are the most frequently consulted ICT facilities, while many called for enhancement and updating of the book/journal collection. **Originality/value** - The research brings to the fore types of ICT needed and sourced for by users, and the need for information providers and users to adapt to the changes. Challenges facing the library in information provision as well as the prospects are discussed, and recommendations made for future improvement and continuous evaluation.

Keywords - Nigeria, Information Sourcing, Information Technology, ICT, University Libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Information sourcing or information seeking is a vital part of man's behaviour. It is a fundamental human process closely related to learning and problem solving. These problems can only be solved when human beings have access to adequate, timely and accurate information. Researches have been carried out to find out how better to provide information or deliver information services to different categories of users. (Marchionin, 1995; Igbeka and Atinmo, 2002; Olorunda and Oyelude, 2003; Fabunmi, 2004). It has been noted that the traditional role of libraries is collection, organization and dissemination of information to information – seeking human beings, and that they get this information in various formats (written, visual, audiovisual and even sometimes realia) and put them or display them in a form in which it is easily retrievable for use. Oyelude, Subair and Adewumi, 2004, their study concludes that though school libraries are a bit general in the provision of information, it is in schools that the basis of good reading and information gathering habits are formed, and that if a child grows knowing the importance of reading and libraries, the habit carries on for life. Igbeka (2003) had earlier asserted that "the ability of a user to interact with various library resources, where searching or utilizing information, enables him to realize the role of information in the achievement of various goals. It is mostly important in academic institutions, since information helps in molding students to be able to achieve academic competence and information literacy" (p.214). Information is needed by students, workers, and researchers and indeed by all human beings. According to Fabunmi (2004), users are seeking an information service that is timely in its delivery, such as responding to requests for information or help desk enquiries; meets their needs; is easy to understand and use; and that is delivered by courteous and knowledgeable staff. The job of information provision is a challenging one, more so for information specialists, and librarians who have to stay constantly abreast of new publications, new formats of information and new technologies to ensure easy access and retrieval by their clients. A major characteristic of the information age today is the growth of information services of various kinds. Previously, archives, libraries, museums and formal educational institutions accounted for the bulk of what could be classified as information services. Such services were then provided free or at minimal cost. However, the advent of computers have increased the awareness of the value of information in personal, organizational and national activities and has promoted the development and growth of diverse new information services based on modern information and communication technology (ICT) and the Internet (Nzotta, 1991). Modern information and communication technology (ICT) in libraries creates a

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new forum for global access. Information for libraries are coming more and more in electronic formats such as E-books, CD-ROMs, e-mail, fax, the Internet etc. Thus there is the need to look at ICT with respect to clientele usage in the libraries. The improved University library system will enable users make maximum use of the library's non-book resources, enable staff and students have access to audio-visual teaching and learning facilities, facilitate the development of instructional multimedia materials, increase the professional development capacity of information specialists in Nigeria and Africa and enhance electronic journal subscription capacity at the library. (MacArthur Newsletter, 2005). The objective of this paper is to examine the various information and communication technologies in the Kenneth Dike Library with respect to how users seek for information from them so as to evaluate the performance of the library in performing its expected role, in the ICT age.

Information Sources

Information sources can be grouped into three major groups.

- (1) Documentary sources (print, non-print & electronic media)
- (2) Institutional sources (institutional home pages or special databases and
- (3) Human sources (human experts) (Chowdhury & Chowdhury, 2001).

Information found in these sources is searched for in various ways. In a digital information environment, two major challenges are faced. They are (1) to select the most appropriate sources of information pertaining to a query and (2) to search and retrieve information from the chosen source(s). The process involved in information seeking strategies can be illustrated thus:

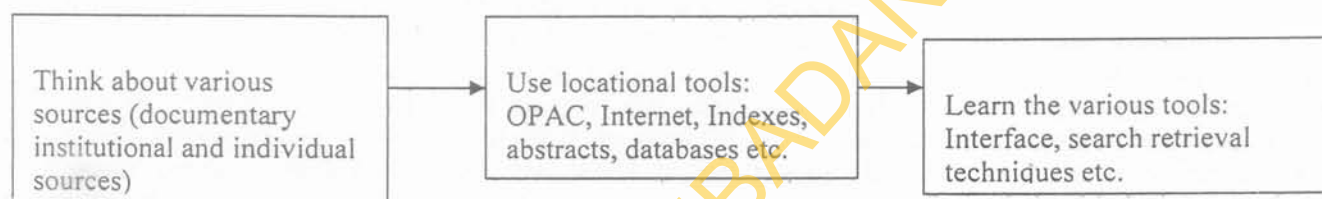


Fig. 1. Information seeking strategies

The information seeking strategies process involved is one in which the information seeker thinks of the various sources, uses locational tools to find the information and learns how to use the various tools. Some other school of thought divides information sources into two major groups:- materials for continuous reading (e.g. books, journals, reports, conference proceedings etc.) and materials not meant for continuous reading. These are reference sources (e.g. Encyclopedia, Dictionaries, Maps, Bibliographies etc.) The use of IT introduces students to various information sources and these tools could be searched regardless of their format, origin of the database and user's computer literacy (Tiefel, 1995). The first electronic information source to appear was the online database. Online search services started in the late sixties and early seventies. (Chowdhury, 1999; Rowley, 1999). Online databases are accessible from remote locations and are usually available through commercial search-service providers or vendors. In the mid-80s the CD-ROM technology appeared. Since then, it has become very popular. Then came the Internet followed by the World Wide Web. The Web is now the most highly used medium for access to electronic information sources. According to Banigo (2001), by the end of the year 2001, the number of Internet users would climb to 700 million. This has proved to be true more so, by the middle of the year 2005, an investigation by these researchers via the Internet showed that over 6 billion people are accessing the Internet. (Source: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>) Omeku (2001) indicated that the diversities of information sources systems and networks have led to the invention of tools and infrastructure vital to the effective management of the information scenario. Information sourcing is an important aspect of the cycle of information; therefore, whether it is done by end users or intermediaries (like librarians, information providers etc.), the job of information searching is becoming more and more complex. This is due to the fast growth of electronic information resources in terms of volume, forms and formats, also the fast development of the technology governing the information retrieval process. These changes are forcing the information searchers, (i.e. the end-users as well as information professionals as intermediaries) to acquire appropriate information literacy skills. (Chowdhury & Chowdhury, 2001).

Modern Information & Communication Technologies (ICT)

Modern ICT is expected to propagate technology in such a way as to create easier ways of sourcing information. Technology is thus being used in innovative ways to explore new ways of doing things. Lim

and Palvia (2001) illustrate the fact that Electronic Dissemination of Information (EDI) provides faster, more accurate communication and is a less costly method of communicating with customers, as compared with other methods e.g. mail, telephone and personal delivery. According to Mosuro (2000), "New technologies offer the potential to overcome some of the drawbacks in information provision. Wider vistas are opened to the information seeker. There has also been the tendency among users, to prefer to use the new technology to search for information rather than other means. Users can also be provided with timely information".

The CD-ROM

CD-ROM, which is an acronym for Compact Disk Read Only Memory, is primarily a publishing medium and possibly one of the greatest advancements in publishing since the Gutenberg Press. (Igbeka and Okpala 2004). Many University libraries are currently using CD-ROM databases to search for information especially in the update of literature. CD-ROM technology has helped the research work in the Kenneth Dike Library by bringing more materials to the disposal of the user, especially as the error-rate of CD-ROM is lower than for magnetic disk. The medium has also helped in integrating music, speech, animation and even moving pictures into research work. Igbeka (2003) categorically summarized the advantages of online resources like the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) and CD-ROM and in a study of CD-ROM use in the Kenneth Dike Library, with Okpala (2004) observed that the facility is very small compared to the number of registered library users. The reasons attributed to this are lack of awareness and unsatisfactory results from the search.

The Internet

Dahiru and Yelwa (2002) observed that the Internet is a worldwide network that connects computers through modem, telephone cables and satellite links. It is one of the modern information technologies that is gradually gaining acceptance in libraries. Okiy (2001) observed that the Internet provides the largest reservoir of vital information in all kinds of disciplines all over the world. It provides information to libraries among others. In Nigeria, there is the need for libraries especially academic libraries to provide Internet services. This is because, the world is increasingly dominated by the competitive use of communication and information technologies and resources to promote and sustain research and development efforts. Hence, the needs for academic libraries to invest substantially and continuously in electronic communication to enable them become part of the emerging information society. The Internet has become an important component of the electronic services in the Academic Institution and has permeated all aspects of life and thus broken down barriers of communication and information access worldwide.

Telephone and GSM

Agu (2001) opines, "The telephone is a very powerful means of communication and information seeking. Someone can be many kilometers away and talk to you and obtain information that would have necessitated your traveling to the origin of the information with the attendant costs and risks. The GSM today has become a veritable tool for information collection". Onu (2004), also states that the mobile phone has not only transformed the way we communicate with each other, but has also transformed the way we work, do business, seek information, and the way messages are easily conveyed. In as much as the GSM has revolutionized the system of information seeking and communication, there has been a difficult problem in communication in Nigeria. The GSM has however not been applied by libraries and information centres in their provision of service to their clients. (Fatoki, 2005).

Roles of the University Library in Modern ICT Provision

University libraries are libraries set up to serve the teaching and research needs of the university community. The objectives of University libraries have been variously identified (Ifidon & Okoli, 2002; Oyelude, 2004). Their traditional functions are teaching, research and public service. These services include the traditional loan transactions, reading facilities within the library, and other ancillary services such as binding and photocopying. Since the library is a custodian of knowledge, therefore, there is the need for ICT to be well developed so as to enhance easy access to information by the library community. Also, students can carry out far better targeted and more effective research. Obscure references will be much more readily retrieved, thereby saving a lot of money that is spent each year re-inventing the wheel because one group of researchers was not aware of what another group was doing. Madu and Adeniran (2000) are of the opinion that: the library must decide which machine – readable material is relevant for the users and which are to be included in the offerings of the library. The ICT in the library is to promote and strengthen the mission of

the university in pursuit of excellent life long learning environment. In this light, the ICT will lead in the deployment of technological innovations in order to enable the library achieve its leadership role as the resourceful information centre in the university. Nkhoma (2003) stated the objectives of computerization of libraries in Zambia noting that no organization can afford to ignore computerization especially in this information technology age. There are problems with the use of Information Technology however, and these challenges have to be faced squarely by libraries.

ICT in the Kenneth Dike Library

The history of automation in the Kenneth Dike Library has been noted (Mosuro, 2000, Adeyemi, 2002, Fatoki, 2004). These studies have documented the various stages of progress in the use of modern ICT in the library. None have examined information sourcing and the use of modern ICT, hence this study. On the 17th of February 2005, the e-class room and the Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) called KDLINK were launched in the library. Before this, CD-ROM search and limited use of Internet facilities were provided. With the expansion of the facilities, it has become necessary to evaluate and find out what impact the added services are having on the users. This is the first of such effort. Periodic evaluation will be carried out in future as well because any service is best evaluated to ensure more improvement (Oyelude, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

A survey method was adopted using questionnaire and observation methods for gathering data, as well as interviewing randomly some of the library users as they came to make use of the facilities. 600 questionnaires were distributed at the various services points in the main library, and also at the various Faculty and Departmental libraries using research assistants. The sample size of 600 was based on the number of registered users within a period of six months – November 2004 to April 2005. Records showed that 563 users registered within this period. 416 questionnaires were returned giving a 69% response rate.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Six hundred questionnaires were distributed and four hundred and sixteen (416) were returned, giving a 69% response rate. Of this amount, 19 i.e. 3% were not usable due to improper filling of responses. Thus, 397 were analyzed giving a 66% response rate. The distribution was done randomly as the students came into the main library or the faculty or departmental libraries. 229 males (58%) and 152 females (38%) as well as 16 (4%) who did not indicate their gender constituted the population of the study. Their ages ranged from 16 years to above 50 in the following pattern. The level of study of the respondents indicated that most were postgraduate students i.e. 150 (38%) followed by 75 (19%) 400 level students were 100 level students. 36 (9%) 100 level students, 34 (9%) 200 level students, 33 (8%) 300 level students, and only 10 (3%) 500 level students responded as well. 21 (5%) did not indicate their level of study and 38 (10%) were U.I. staff, lecturers, or users from outside the University of Ibadan. On the question of whether they used modern ICT resources in the Kenneth Dike Library, 197 (49.6%) responded in the affirmative, while 199 (50.1%) responded negatively. One respondent did not indicate use. A few of those who gave a negative response - (3) however said they had used ICT resources elsewhere and not in the Kenneth Dike Library. The types of ICT used in the library by respondents were questioned. Multiple responses were elicited, thus many options were chosen. 49 respondents claimed that they had not used the ICT resources provided in the library, but would like to use the resources that have been provided. They expressed the need to send and receive e-mail, search the Internet and print documents. The table above shows the types of resources that are generally needed by the library users. It expressed their priorities in information sourcing. Textbooks and Internet search are the most needed resources, followed by journals, OPAC, and reference books, newspapers and thesis. An attempt was made to find out the level of satisfaction with the library's services and compare the previous use of the manual system with the current one of ICT. The data gathered revealed that 14 (3.5%) respondents only are very satisfied with the services, 77 (19.4%) are satisfied, 118 (29.7%) are fairly satisfied, 84 (21.2%) are undecided as to their satisfaction or not, while 53 (13.4%) did not indicate what they felt. The respondents fairly satisfied, satisfied and very satisfied totaling 209 respondents i.e. 52.6%, seems to point to the fact that the library is performing a little above average. Only 51 (12.9%) indicated total non-satisfaction and even though many refrained from commenting, a sizeable number - (52) could be for or against. Comparison between the manual and ICT systems revealed that a very large proportion of respondents 298 (75%) opined that modern ICT is better than manual systems. Only 21 (5.3%) indicated preference for the manual system. 41 (10.3%) did not make any choices, 35 (8.8%) commented that Modern ICT is inadequate and 2 (0.5%) said the manual system is inadequate. This result shows that ICT is felt to be a welcome development in the library. In all, the data gathered is indicative of

the fact that information sourcing through modern ICT is desirable in this new age and that the Kenneth Dike Library is making efforts in the provision of this information.

Ranked level of satisfaction		Ranked Comparison of ICT with Manual	
Very satisfied	= 14	Modern ICT Better	= 298
Fairly Satisfied	= 118	Not indicated	= 41
Undecided	= 84	Modern ICT Inadequate	= 35
Satisfied	= 77	Manual Better	= 21
Not Satisfied	= 51	Manual Inadequate	= 2
Not indicated	= 53		

N=397 Where N = Total No. of Respondents

Improvements are however required in the following areas as tabulated below in table III.

Majority of the respondents i.e. 110 suggested that provision of more user points is desirable so as to improve the ICT use in the library, while 93 respondents want provision of stable power supply, and request for periodical user education programmes are called for by 67 respondents. Training and retraining of staff employed was suggested by 44 respondents as well as employment of more trained staff should also be priority was suggested by 49 respondents. Adequate maintenance of the facilities is another crucial issue that should be addressed. 38 respondents suggested this. These formed the areas of concern of the users. 33 respondents also felt that users should be given more time access to the ICT resources than hitherto, and that the library should create awareness for the new library services being offered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There is the need for university libraries to move from traditional reliance on external funding such as donor and government support, especially in the area of information and communication technologies (ICTs), to self-generating funds and other alternative funding sources. Libraries should be well funded and not treated as a pure "donation" or "dumping" ground. Appropriate application of ICT can also be used to strengthen and expand both locally generated content in the form of scholarly papers (grey literature) and access to international cultural literacy. Library staff skills should be upgraded. They should undergo constant training and retraining. The Library's infrastructures and capacity need to be strengthened. Buildings, equipment and other supporting infrastructure should be properly maintained. Where changes need to be effected, it should be as and when due. Education of users in time with the new ICTs introduced should be vigorously pursued. This makes ICT less cumbersome and frightening for the user. Every journal that is offered free should not be included in the collection unless its continuous donation is guaranteed. The library should also endeavour to purchase an electricity generating plant or gain access to a functional one so as to avoid the embarrassment of erratic power supply that hampers the smooth working of modern ICT.

CONCLUSION

Modern ICT has greatly affected the information sourcing of library users. As a result of this, librarians and other users of information must adapt to the changing technological environment in order to be able to use electronic resources and access tools, respond to new user information needs, participate in the national, regional and global infrastructure. Above all, information sourcing in an ICT dependent environment is one that needs stable and reliable infrastructure base. Constant electricity supply must be ensured to be able to provide adequate access to the ICT facilities. In a library setting, getting the needed materials to the potential user is of vital importance and the skills of the librarian or information provider is especially called for, hence training and retraining to meet the challenges of the changing ICT world must be carried out. Users of the information also should be carried along in this education so as not to create a gap in the information flow. Funding is a major constraint, but if enough effort is made by information providers, government and donor agencies, information sourcing will become a much more enjoyable venture via modern ICT than it presently is.

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Table I: Age of Respondents

Age Range	No	%
16 – 20	37	9
21 – 25	94	24
26 – 30	106	27
31 – 35	63	16
36 – 40	37	9
41 – 45	26	7
46 – 50	16	4
> 50	7	2
Not indicated	11	3

Table II: Ranked Types of Resources needed by Users

S/No	Resources	No of Respondents
1.	Text books	48
2.	Internet Search	28
3.	Journals	26
4.	OPAC	19
5.	Reference books	14
6.	CDROM Search	14
7.	Newspapers	10
8.	CD attached to books	10
9.	Theses	8
10.	Sending E-mail	6
11.	Receiving e-mail	6
12.	Document printing	6
13.	Current law reports	4
14.	Law books	4
15.	Magazines	3
16.	Abstracts	3
17.	Catalogues	3
18.	Television	2
19.	Seminar	1
20.	Not indicated	37

Table III: Suggestions for Improvement

A. GENERAL		
1.	Allocation of more funds to the library	5
2.	Provision of stable power supply	93
3.	Adequate maintenance of the facilities	38
4.	Generate Publicity/Create awareness for the library Services	30
5.	Provide a user friendly environment e.g. provide Air-conditioners and more functional toilets	15
6.	Update the ICT resources	19
7.	Security should be beefed up	4
B. RESOURCES		
8.	Provide more user points i.e. computers	110
9.	Acquire more current books and journals	9
10.	The library should be networked to the Faculties	7
11.	Provide guides or manuals on the use of the library ICT	5
12.	Sitting space should be increased	11
13.	Provide more CD Rom	2
14.	Provision of the serials module on the OPAC	1
15.	Resources of the OPAC should be found on shelves	2
C. STAFF		
16.	Workers should be friendly	2
17.	Training and retraining of staff should be carried out	44
18.	More trained staff should be employed	49
D. USERS		
19.	User Education programmes should be conducted periodically	67
20.	Users should be given more time access to the ICT resources	33
E. OTHERS		
21.	Provide 24-hours service	9
22.	The services should be provided free of charge	7
23.	Subscription to more journals	3
24.	The charges for services should be brought low	5
25.	Bureaucratic obstacles should be removed	3
26.	Library should be fully computerized	2