Awareness and Utilization of Electronic Information Resources among Undergraduates of Library and Information Science in Federal University Dutsin-Ma (FUDMA)

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Abstract

This study investigated the Awareness and Utilization of Electronic Information Resources among Undergraduates of Library and Information Science in Federal University Dutsin-ma Katsina State. The research questions sought to identify the types of e-resources available in Federal University Dustin-ma library, the level of awareness, and the challenges encountered in accessing and utilizing EIRs among Undergraduates of LIS in Federal University Dustin-ma. Survey research method was adopted for the study. The population of the study included six hundred and seventy-five library and information science undergraduates of Federal University Dutsin-ma. Simple random sampling technique was used to select sixty-five students. The research instrument used to collect data for the study is online questionnaire using SurveyMonkey. Descriptive analysis using frequency table and simple percentages was used to analyze the data collected. The findings revealed that a significant majority of LIS students are aware of the e-resources available in the FUDMA Library, the most recognized and available e-resources in the FUDMA Library include electronic books , JSTOR , and African Journals Online (AJOL), the primary use of e-resources is to review literature and to gain information on specific topics, the major challenges faced by students include inadequate skills to formulate search strategies, literacy and search problems. The study recommended that FUDMA library should develop campaigns and integrate resources like TEEAL, Trip Medical Database, and CD-ROMs into coursework to increase awareness and utilization among students, the Department of Library and Information Science at FUDMA should regularly conduct interactive workshops and orientation sessions to enhance awareness and understanding of e-resources among students.

Keywords: Electronic Information Resources (EIRs); Awareness and Utilisation; Library and Information Science Undergraduates; Federal University Dutsin-Ma; Academic Libraries; Information Literacy.

Introduction

Electronic information resources require technological facilities and users who have the skills to interact with them. Manjack (2018) explains electronic information resources in relation to computers, network access, electricity and the people who use them. The resources themselves may include electronic books, journals, databases and other forms of information available in digital formats (Ezema & Chizoba, 2018).

The importance of electronic resources in academic libraries is not limited to their availability. Students must also be aware of the resources and possess the skills required to locate and use relevant information. Adeleke and Emeahara (2018) examined the relationship between information literacy and the use of electronic information resources and their work points to the importance of information skills in the effective use of such resources. Awareness is therefore an important starting point. A student who does not know that a particular database or electronic collection exists may not attempt to use it.

The issue is particularly relevant to Library and Information Science students because they are being prepared to work with information resources and information users. Their ability to search electronic databases, evaluate information and retrieve relevant materials is part of the practical knowledge needed for their future professional activities.

Statement of the Problem

The Federal University Dutsin-Ma Library has invested in electronic information resources to support academic activities. However, the existence of these resources does not automatically result in their effective use by students. This has become an an antagonism to excellent Utilization of these information resources. It could be relating to access, facilities, awareness and students' ability to use electronic resources effectively.

Therefore, the gap identified by the researcher was that, none of the earlier researchers focused on awareness and utilization of e-resources among Library and Information Science Students alone, as the skills acquired during their training may influence their ability to provide information services effectively after graduation. This made it necessary for the researcher to provide further Empirical evidence on this research endeavour. Thus, it was against this backdrop that the problem of the study was to determine the awareness and utilization of electronic information resources among LIS undergraduates in FUDMA and to identify the challenges they encounter.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. Identify the types of electronic information resources available in FUDMA Library;
2. Determine the level of awareness of electronic information resources among LIS undergraduates in FUDMA;
3. Find out the purposes for which LIS undergraduates use electronic information resources; and
4. Identify the challenges encountered by LIS undergraduates in accessing and utilizing electronic information resources.

Literature Review

Electronic information resources (EIRs) are information materials that can be accessed through electronic devices and digital networks. They include electronic books, electronic journals, databases, institutional repositories and other digital materials. Manjack (2018) relates electronic

information resources to the availability of computers, network access, electricity and the people who use them. Ezema and Chizoba (2018) similarly identify databases, books, journals, newspapers, magazines, archives, theses, conference papers, government publications and research reports among the materials that may be available electronically.

The value of EIRs in academic libraries lies partly in their ability to provide access to current and diverse information. Ezema and Chizoba (2018) observed that students and academic staff make use of electronic resources to obtain relevant and up-to-date information. Electronic resources also make it possible to search large amounts of information more conveniently, while access and use are influenced by the availability of information and communication technologies within the academic environment (Aregbesola & Oguntayo, 2014; Ani, 2013).

Previous studies show that awareness does not always correspond with effective utilization. Baro, Endouware and Ubogu (2011), for example, found that scholarly electronic journal databases were underutilized by medical students at Delta State University, with lack of awareness of existing resources identified as a major problem. Okello and Magara (2008) similarly reported lack of awareness as an obstacle to the access and utilization of electronic journals among students at Makerere University.

Oyedapo and Ojo (2013) observed underutilization of electronic resources at Obafemi Awolowo University and identified poor searching skills as the major reason. Baro et al. (2011) also found that scholarly electronic journal databases were underutilized, while Ndinoshiho (2017) reported that although most students at the University of Namibia's Northern Campus used the internet, electronic databases were significantly underutilized. The latter study identified shortage of computers, unreliable internet connection and lack of skills among the major constraints.

Gakibayo, Ikoja-Odongo and Constant (2013) found that students at Mbarara University Library experienced difficulties in using electronic resources because of inadequate computer and information literacy skills, insufficient computers and slow internet connectivity. The authors concluded that more needed to be done to improve electronic resource use in the institution.

Adeniran (2013) reported a similar situation at Redeemers University. Although students were aware of the different types of electronic resources available in the library, their rate of use was low. The study associated this with the large amount of irrelevant information retrieved, difficulty filtering search results, download delays, failure to find required information and inadequate search skills.

The literature identifies both technical and user-related barriers to electronic resource utilization. Gakibayo et al. (2013) found that inadequate computer and information literacy skills, insufficient computers and slow internet connectivity constrained students' use of electronic resources.

Research Method

The study adopted a quantitative approach using a descriptive survey design. The study was conducted among Library and Information Science undergraduates at Federal University Dutsin-Ma. The population comprised 675 students of the Department of Library and information Science, Federal University Dutsinma. A sample of 65 students was selected through simple random sampling. A structured online questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was created using an online survey application and distributed through WhatsApp. Data collection ended after 65 responses had been received. The data were analysed using frequency counts and percentages.

Results and Discussions

Table 1: Types of Electronic Information Resources

Types of Information Resources Available	Frequency	Percentage
Electronic Books	22	33.85
JSTOR	10	15.38
African Journals Online (AJOL)	6	9.23
Institutional Repository	6	9.23
AGORA	5	7.69
SCOPUS Database	5	7.69
OARE	3	4.62
ScienceDirect	3	4.62
HINARI	2	3.08
SAGE Journals	2	3.08
Law and Social Sciences	1	1.54
Total	65	100

Source: Field Survey, May 2024.

Electronic books were the most recognised resource, with 22 respondents (33.85%). JSTOR followed with 10 respondents (15.38%). AJOL and the Institutional Repository were each identified by six respondents (9.23%), while AGORA and SCOPUS were each identified by five respondents (7.69%). No respondent identified TEEAL, Trip Medical Database, CD-ROMs, electronic newspapers, electronic magazines or DVDs.

Table 2: Level of Awareness of Electronic Information Resources

Level of Awareness	Frequency	Percentage
Extremely aware	17	26.15
Aware	41	63.08
Partially aware	5	7.69
Not at all aware	2	3.08
Total	65	100

Source: Field Survey, May 2024.

The result shows that 17 respondents (26.15%) were extremely aware of the electronic resources available in the FUDMA Library, while 41 (63.08%) were aware. Five respondents (7.69%) were partially aware and two (3.08%) were not at all aware. None indicated that they were not interested in the resources.

Table 3: Extent of Utilization of Selected Electronic Information Resources

E-Resources	Highly utilized	Utilized	Rarely utilized	Not utilized	Undecided
E-books	15.38%	10.77%	64.62%	12.31%	0.00%
E-journals	7.69%	55.38%	32.31%	3.08%	1.54%
E-databases	36.92%	15.38%	32.31%	10.77%	4.62%
Institutional Repository	6.15%	15.38%	3.08%	72.31%	3.08%
JSTOR	7.69%	32.31%	33.85%	15.38%	10.77%
SCOPUS Database	15.38%	9.23%	36.92%	15.38%	15.38%

Source: Field Survey, May 2024.

The use of electronic resources differed from one resource to another. E-databases had the highest proportion of respondents reporting high utilization at 36.92%. E-journals had the highest proportion in the "utilized" category, at 55.38%.

E-books were rarely utilized by 64.62% of respondents, despite being the most recognised resource in the earlier table. The Institutional Repository had the lowest level of use among the resources shown, with 72.31% reporting that they did not use it. JSTOR and SCOPUS recorded moderate levels of use.

Table 4: Purpose of Using Electronic Information Resources

Purpose of Using E-Resources	Frequency	Percentage
To review literature	29	44.62
To gain information on specific topics	21	32.31
To complete assignments	10	15.38
For leisure reading	3	4.62
To supplement study notes	2	3.08
Total	65	100.00

Source: Field Survey, May 2024.

Reviewing literature was the main reason respondents used electronic information resources. Twenty-nine respondents (44.62%) selected this option. Obtaining information on specific topics followed with 21 respondents (32.31%). Ten respondents (15.38%) used EIRs to complete assignments, while three (4.62%) used them for leisure reading and two (3.08%) used them to supplement study notes. No respondent selected any other purpose.

Table 5: Challenges Encountered in Accessing and Utilizing Electronic Information Resources

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Access problems	5	7.69
Slow Internet speed	3	4.62
Inadequate networked computers	1	1.54
Frequent power cuts	6	9.23
High costs associated with Internet use	5	7.69
Literacy and search problems	11	16.92
Inadequate skills to formulate search strategies	13	20.00
Inadequate knowledge and skills to evaluate e-resources	10	15.38
Staff-related problems	1	1.54
Inadequate skills to use advanced search options	10	15.38
Total	65	100.00

Source: Field Survey, May 2024.

The most frequently reported problem was inadequate skills to formulate search strategies, reported by 13 respondents (20.00%). Literacy and search problems followed with 11 respondents (16.92%). Inadequate knowledge and skills to evaluate e-resources and inadequate skills to use advanced search options each accounted for 15.38%.

Frequent power cuts were reported by 9.23%, while access problems and high Internet costs were each reported by 7.69%. Slow Internet speed was reported by 4.62%. Inadequate networked

computers and staff-related problems each accounted for 1.54%. None of the respondents reported lack of off-campus access to subscribed e-resources.

Discussion of Major Findings

The study found a generally high level of awareness of electronic information resources among LIS undergraduates at Federal University Dutsin-Ma, with 89.23% of respondents indicating that they were aware or extremely aware of the available resources. However, awareness differed across individual resources. E-books were the most recognised resource (33.85%), followed by JSTOR (15.38%), AJOL and the Institutional Repository (9.23% each), while some resources such as TEEAL and Trip Medical Database were not identified by any respondent. The recognition of e-books is related to the study of Tella et al. (2018), which examined the perception and usage pattern of e-books among Library and Information Science students in selected universities in Nigeria.

Similarly, the study found that E-databases had the highest level of utilization, while the Institutional Repository was largely unused, with 72.31% of respondents indicating that they did not utilize it. This supports the position of Azonobi, Uwaifo and Tella (2020) that the use of electronic information resources may be influenced by factors beyond availability, including users' confidence, perceived usefulness and self-efficacy. The low use of some resources may therefore be associated with inadequate skills and limited knowledge of how to effectively use them.

The low utilization of some electronic resources can also be linked to the work of Gbaje and Kotso (2014), who found that Nigerian academic library websites did not always effectively provide information about library services and facilitate access to available resources.

The major challenges encountered by respondents were inadequate skills to formulate search strategies (20%), literacy and search problems (16.92%), and inadequate knowledge and skills to evaluate electronic resources (15.38%). This is consistent with Azonobi *et a*l. (2020), who identified self-efficacy as an important factor influencing the use of electronic information resources. The findings therefore suggest the need for practical training in search strategies, advanced searching and the evaluation of electronic information resources.

Therefore , the study shows that awareness alone does not guarantee effective utilization of electronic information resources. Effective use also depends on students' skills, confidence and the visibility and accessibility of available resources. The studies of Tella and his colleagues, as well as Gbaje and Kotso, therefore provide useful support for understanding the findings of the present study.

Conclusion

The study examined the awareness and utilization of electronic information resources among LIS undergraduates at Federal University Dutsin-Ma. The findings show that the students generally know about the electronic resources provided by the library.

The findings therefore point to the need for more practical instruction on the use of electronic resources. Greater attention is also needed for resources that students rarely use or do not recognise because the electronic information literacy and effective use of digital resources can strengthen LIS students' professional capacity and prepare them for information-based services and opportunities, including infopreneurial activities.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

1. The Department of Library and Information Science and the University Library should organise regular orientation and practical sessions on electronic information resources.
2. Practical training should be given on search strategy formulation, advanced searching and evaluation of electronic information, since these were among the major difficulties reported by respondents.
3. The library should give more attention to resources with low utilization, including the Institutional Repository and specialised databases.
4. Information literacy should be given greater attention in the LIS curriculum, with students given opportunities to use electronic resources during coursework and research activities.

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