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Flora Ifeoma Okogwu

Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State Nigeria, floraokogwu@gmail.com

Reuben E. Ozioko Department of Library and Information Science Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike Umuahia

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Selection Practices of Electronic Resources in Federal University Libraries in Southeast Nigeria

Okogwu, F. I¹ and Ozioko, R.E²

¹Ebonyi State University Library, P.M.B 53 Ebonyi State, Nigeria

²Department of Library and Information Science, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Umuahia Abia State, Nigeria

Correspondence Authors' Email: floraokogwu@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper examined the selection practices of electronic resources in federal university libraries in South East Nigeria. The objectives of the study include to find out; who is responsible for selecting electronic resources in the libraries under study; the tools that guide the librarians in selecting electronic resources; the criteria considered by the libraries in evaluating electronic resources for acquisition. The research adopted a descriptive survey design. The survey used questionnaire and interview as instruments of data collection. The population of the study consists of all the 53 Librarians in the three departments; E-library, Serials, and Collection development departments of the libraries under study. Data collected were tabulated and analyzed using simple statistics (mean). The findings revealed the tools used by the libraries to make sound e-resources selection which include the use of trial offer by mounting a link to their resources and the use of reviews provided through electronic resources with a grand mean of 2.75 to 3.20, which are all above the cut-off point of 2.50 on a 4 point rating scale; the librarians in e-library, serials, and collection development recommend electronic resources but the final decision on selection of electronic resources for acquisition rest with the university librarian; that the libraries under study had no selection team/committee and the criteria considered by the libraries in selecting electronic resources for their library were revealed. The study recommended that the libraries should adopt an extensive inclusion of all the stakeholders of the library in selecting electronic resources. Also, the libraries should set up a selection team/committee responsible for e-resources selection.

Keywords: Selection, E-resources, University Libraries, Information, and Communication Technology (ICT), Federal Universities

Introduction

In contemporary university library system, the information needs of library users are anchored on electronic resources collection. As such, it becomes important that the university libraries should acquire electronic resources to attain to the information needs of the library users. University libraries are established to continuously support the university towards the achievement of its goals and mission in the areas of teaching, learning, research and community service (Olanlokun & Salisu, 1993, and Aina, 2004). University libraries have been widely recognized as indispensable repositories of useful information, and indeed, the 'heart' of the university system. Arguably, it is a futile effort to establish a university system without a library, given that the mission and vision of education generally will be a far cry and elusive. The central aim of university libraries is to collect, preserve, and disseminate information to users for teaching, research, and learning. In addition to the university's traditional functions of teaching, research, and learning, it has the functions of pursuit, promotion, and dissemination of knowledge; provision of intellectual leadership; manpower development; promotion of social and economic modernization; promotion of intra-and inter-continental and international understanding. The university libraries were established to provide information materials to actualize the aforementioned functions of the university. Their central aim and function are to collect, preserve, and disseminate vital information resource.

The university library exists in an academic environment and its role includes developing a highly visible collection that supports the academic activities of teaching, learning, and research of the faculty and students. Considering the role library plays in the university, therefore, it acquires collections in broad terms of quantity and quality in the form of prints and electronics to support the teaching, learning, research and recreational purposes. These resources

include books, journals, abstracts, audio and video CDs and other electronic resources such as online databases, web resources, e-journal, e-books and other in-house databases which have been evolved with the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

With the emergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), electronic resources that can be employed for effective service delivery by university libraries are of different types and formats. The electronic resources come in the form of digital which can only be accessed with the use of internet aided by computer and made available to the library. The rapid growth of (ICT) has given rise to the evolution of several new terms like paperless society, e-resources, digital library. Words like digital content, an electronic library containing e-journals, e-books, journal consortiums, open access, digital library, Digital Rights Management (DRM) all have become simply buzzwords along with the traditional analog or print resources in the present library system (Chaudhuri, 2012). This implies that traditional university libraries now lack the wherewithal to meet present-day information needs of patrons. The increasing digital environment or global community, which is characterized by the wide application of electronic resources in information storage and retrieval, has resulted in a total overhauling of the traditional library system in various universities. Mansur (2012) posits that the introduction of ICT, the Internet and particularly the World Wide Web has brought a dramatic improvement in virtually every human endeavor, including collection development practices. For instance, an activity or a task that used to take some hours to do is now just a mouse click away. He further stated that the publishers of these e-formats do not remain behind; they take advantage of these applications to a large extent by exploring and exploiting (tapping) the treasure house of electronic resources.

Electronic resources are described by International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) (2012) as those materials that require computer access, whether through a personal computer, mainframe, or handheld mobile devices. They may be accessed remotely via the internet or locally. The concept of e-resources encompasses the following: e-zine, e-text or e-book, abstracting and indexing databases such as MEDLINE, e-journal, locally loaded databases, e-library, CD-ROMs, websites, among others. According to Sadeh and Ellingsen (2005), an e-resource is a package of e-journals or a database of abstracts and indexes that include the full text of some or all articles referenced by the indexes. Electronic resources also include products that aid in resource access for users, namely, A-Z lists, Open URL, servers, federated search engines, resources that provide full-text content such as publishers' electronic journal content, journal content platforms like Project Muse or JSTER and content aggregators such as EBSCOhost's Academic Search Premier and proxy servers or other authentication tools (Bothmann & Holmberg, 2008). Electronic Resource is one of the emerging environment in libraries & Information communication in the competitive service. It usually consists of e-books, e-Journals, articles, newspaper, thesis, dissertation, databases and CD-ROMs, which are likely to be the alternative to the print media. Emerald, EbscoHost, Scopus are some of the examples of online databases that exist in the library. Electronic resources are of various types and categories such as online databases, federated search engines, e-books, e-journals, digital institutional repository etc. These databases that are aggregated by vendors or publishers are only accessed through a subscription for a fee before the license is given as an authority to use the e-resource.

Selection according to Reitz (2004) is the process of deciding which materials should be added to a library collection. Selection of information resources is the core collection development function, and the primary objective of the selection decision for any format is

fundamentally the same: satisfying users needs. Cabonero and Mayrena (2012) see selection as the heart of collection development. Kennedy (2006) considers selection as a 'high profile' duty of librarianship. Library selection should be conducted by professional librarians, with the addition of staff outside of the library making suggestions for possible selection. Selection is a necessary first step in the acquisition process. Information materials are selected on the basis of their perceived usefulness to a group of readers. This is because "the amount of satisfaction a reader finds in the library depends directly upon the materials the library has available for his use, observed Carter in Nwosu and Udo-Anyanwu (2015). With the emergence of electronic resources, job responsibilities of selectors have changed drastically. Selection of e-resources outside the guidance of a collection development policy leads to haphazard unfocused groupings of resources that may not support the mission of the library. In the past, selectors recommended new titles on an individual basis using traditional selection criteria such as quality, relevance, use, and cost observed, Welch (2002).

Some university libraries depend so much on traditional prints which may not necessarily attain to the information needs of the library users due to its out-datedness and as such there is an urgent need to select and make available electronic resources to augment the traditional prints in the library. It is against this background that the researchers investigate the selection practices of e-resources in Federal University Libraries in South East Nigeria. The federal university libraries in South East Nigeria under study are: University of Nigeria Nsukka Library, (UNN); Nnamdi Azikiwe library Awka,(NAU); Federal University of Technology Library Owerri, (FUTO) and Michael Okpara University of Agriculture library, Umuahia (MOUAAU). The newly established Ndoffu Alike Federal University in Ikwo Ebonyi State is not studied.

Statement of Problem

With the advent of electronic resources, job responsibilities of selectors have changed drastically. Selection of e-resources outside the guidance of a collection development policy leads to haphazard, unfocused groupings of resources that may not support the mission of the library. In the past, selectors recommended new titles on an individual basis using traditional selection criteria such as quality, relevance, use, and cost. With the emergence of electronic resources, the selection processes have changed and there is need to examine the practices of selecting electronic resources in federal university libraries in Southeast Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the selection practices of e-resources in the federal university libraries in Southeast Nigeria. This study has the following specific objectives:

1. to find out who is responsible for the selection of e-resources in federal university libraries in Southeast Nigeria.
2. to find out the tools that guide the librarians in selecting e-resources in federal university libraries in Southeast Nigeria.
3. to find out the criteria the libraries consider when selecting e-resources for acquisition in federal university libraries in Southeast Nigeria.

Research Questions

Three research questions which were derived from the objectives of the study were formulated to guide the study:

1. Who is responsible for the selection of e-resources in federal university libraries in Southeast Nigeria?
2. What are the tools that guide librarians in selecting e-resources in federal university libraries in Southeast Nigeria?
3. What are the criteria the libraries consider when selecting e-resources in federal university libraries in Southeast Nigeria?

Significance and Justification of the Study

In Nigeria just like any other developing country, the application of information and communication technology has been on a snail step. University libraries still depend so much on traditional prints which may not necessarily attain to the information needs of the library users due to its out-datedness and as such there is an urgent need to recommend, select and make available electronic resources to augment the traditional prints in the library. Reason for selecting this area for the study is because existing literature did not indicate that a study of this kind has been conducted in this geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

It could be expected that the findings of this study could be useful to the following groups: the management of Federal university libraries, the collection development librarians, e-resources librarians and other librarians in other university libraries as well as university student users of the resources and other researchers in related areas. The findings of this study will as well reveal the selection practices of e-resources and equip libraries with selection practices.

Conceptual Clarifications

Electronic Resources

Electronic resources is defined by Reitz (2004) as material consisting of data and/or computer program(s) encoded for reading and manipulation by a computer, by the use of a peripheral device directly connected to the computer, such as a CD-ROM drive, or remotely via a network, such as the Internet. According to her the forms include software applications, electronic texts, bibliographic databases, institutional repositories, websites, e-books, collections of e-journals, etc. Electronic resources not publicly available free of charge usually require licensing and authentication. Bavakenthy, Veeran, and Salih (2003) in discussing the concept viewed that, e-resources are resources in which information is stored electronically and are accessible through electronic systems and networks.

'E-resource' is a broad term that includes a variety of publishing models, including Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs), CD-ROMs, online databases, e-journals, e-books, internet resources, Print-on-demand (POD), e-mail publishing, wireless publishing, electronic link and web publishing, etc. In this context, the term primarily denotes "any electronic product that delivers a collection of data be it in text, numerical, graphical, or time based, as a commercially available resource". According to Tsakonas et al. (2006), electronic information resources are information resources provided in electronic form, and these include resources available on the Internet such as e-books, e-journals, online database, Compact Disk Read Only Memory (CD-ROM) databases and other computer-based electronic networks, among others. Joseph (2010) as cited by Chimah and Nwokaocha (2015) identified some categories of electronic information resources as follows; federated search, virtual reference, digital

institutional repository, online databases – JSTOR (<http://www.jstor.org>, digital library, virtual libraries and open access repository.

Selection of e-resources

Selection of e-resource is the heart and a core function of collection development. Its primary objective of the selection decision for any format is fundamentally the same: satisfying users needs. With the advent of e-resources, job responsibilities of selectors have changed drastically. Selection of e-resources outside the guidance of a collection development policy leads to haphazard unfocused groupings of resources that may not support the mission of the library. In the past, selectors recommended new titles on an individual basis using traditional selection criteria such as quality, relevance, use, and cost observed, Welch (2002). Similarly, Davis (1997) highlighted that in the traditional selection, the most fundamental criteria are designed to evaluate the reputation of the authors and publishers, ascertain the level and depth of the content, and consider any special format or features that add value to the title. For electronic resources, these criteria quickly evolve into an evaluation of other parties participating in the creation of the product, assurance that the correct content is available, and confirmation that the product performs as expected. Edgar (2003) viewed that intellectual content has characteristics and that these characteristics can be used to guide selection. Due to the technicality of the e-resources, their selection is not in isolation. Many libraries today are utilizing a team approach in order to achieve a qualitative selection for acquisition. Yu and Breivold (2008) affirm the ideas of Edger that selectors must now address new issues as part of the selection and management processes, issues such as easy and quick accessibility for users, continuous content evaluation and technological and legal concerns.

For traditional library materials, the selector makes the decision to acquire an item with only limited consultation with other departments following established policies and guidelines. IFLA (2012) revealed that electronic resources present a number of hurdles not encountered with traditional library materials. In addition to the criteria that apply to analog materials, electronic publications raise complex issues around licensing, access, networking, pricing, ownership, and rapidly changing technology and standards. With electronic resources, the selector cannot make a decision to acquire an electronic resource in isolation and must liaise closely with other departments in the library to evaluate the suitability of a resource prior to the decision to acquire. Typically, this will involve consultation with staff responsible for technical systems and services, acquisitions, resource discovery (cataloging and access), contracts and licensing, and service delivery.

To ensure consistency of approach it is a good practice to establish clear guidelines and processes for the selection of electronic resources. These might include the development of a checklist for selection and evaluation; establishing clear roles and lines of responsibility and consultation and the establishment of an electronic resource evaluation panel which could be composed of a group of electronic resource stakeholders from various departments within the institution. To involve users in collection development, the library may consider ways in which to receive feedback from its user on electronic resources. This could include feedback on potential new resources as well as feedback on existing resources. The library should also inform users about new content and services as well as potential temporary problems accessing electronic resources. To establish if an electronic resource is appropriate for the library's collection and to help determine the true and hidden cost implications of acquisition, storage, maintenance, preservation and other issues, detailed information regarding the item is required.

Research Method

The design of this work is a descriptive survey research design. Descriptive surveys are aimed at collecting data on, and describing in a systematic manner, the characteristic features or facts about a given population (Nworgu, 2006). The research design was suitable for this study because it enabled the researcher to meet the high standard of quality research without the researcher manipulating the independent variables. The study obtained data and described the e-resources selection practices of federal university libraries in Southeast Nigeria. The instruments used for the data collection are questionnaires and interview for the collection development librarian/ e-library/ digital librarian.

The questionnaires are for the librarians in three departments (e-library, serial and collection development units) that are involved in the selection of e-resources. They were required to indicate the selection practices which include the responsibility of selection, tools used in selection and the criteria that are considered by the libraries in the selection of e-resources for their libraries. The population of the study consists of all the 53 librarians from the four libraries with the following breakdown; Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umuahia library has 6 librarians, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka library has 8 librarians, Federal University of Technology, Owerri library has 23 librarians and University of Nigeria Nsukka library has 16 librarians. The data were tabulated and analyzed using simple statistics (mean).

Results and Discussion

Research question 1. Selection responsibility for electronic resources in federal university libraries in South East Nigeria.

The data providing answers to the above research question are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1: Responses on the responsibility of selection of e-resources in federal university libraries in South East Nigeria

		Name of institutions								
S/N	Options	UNN N=16	%	NAU N=8	%	FUTO N=23	%	MOUA N= 6	%	D
1	University Librarian	10	62.5	6	75	13	56.52	3	50	A
2	The collection development Librarian	3	18.75	1	12.5	6	26.08	2	33.33	A
3	Digital Librarian	1	6.25	1	12.5	2	8.69	1	16.66	A
4	Serial Librarian	1	6.25	0	0	1	4.34	0	0	D
5	Selection Team/ Committee	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	D
6	Faculty Members	1	6.25	0	0	1	4.34	0	0	D
7	Technical Staff only	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	D
	Total	16	100	8	100	23	100	6	100	

Keys: D=Decision, Under Decision A=Agree, D=Disagree

From the above table, it can be deduced that the highest percentage of respondents agreed that the university librarian is responsible for the selection of electronic resources in all the federal university libraries in Southeast Nigeria along with the collection development librarian and digital librarian. All the respondents never agreed to the technical staff be responsible for selecting electronic resources. They also did not indicate having selection team/ committee. The interview responses revealed that the final selection lies with the University librarian who is the overall collection development librarian. In addition, to the listed options on the table, the respondents revealed that students also recommend electronic resources for selection.

Research question 2: What are the tools that guide librarians in selecting e-resources?

The data providing answers to the above research question are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Responses on tools used to make sound e-resources selection in university libraries under study

		Name of institutions				
S/N		UNN	NAU	FUTO	MOUA	OVERALL
		\bar{x}	\bar{x}	\bar{x}	\bar{x}	\bar{x}
		N=16	N=8	N=23	N=6	N=53
1	The use of trial offers by mounting a link to their resources without cost	2.75	3.00	3.26	3.17	3.04
2	Visits to similar libraries that already have the product and see it in action there.	3.00	3.13	3.13	3.67	3.23
3	The use of vendor exhibits at conferences.	2.69	3.13	2.87	3.67	3.09
4	The use of demonstrations from publisher /vendor in the library and demonstrate their resource	3.25	2.50	3.00	2.83	2.89
5	The use of reviews provided through electronic resources	2.25	2.00	2.61	2.67	2.38
	Grand Mean	2.78	2.75	2.97	3.20	2.93

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree, A- Agree, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

The data presented in table 2 reveals that, the mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on the five (5) identified items on tools used to make sound e-resources selection in federal university libraries in South East Nigeria had mean values ranging from 2.75 to 3.20 which are all above the cut-off point of 2.50 on a 4 point rating scale. The above findings indicated that the respondents agreed that all the five (5) items in the table were used as tools in making sound e-resources selection in Federal university libraries in South East Nigeria.

The interview responses from the four university libraries studied also stated that for a sound selection of electronic resources, the service providers are requested to allow the libraries

to use the resources without cost. This will enable the libraries see how the resource works and the general contents of the resource to ensure that the information needs of the users (curriculum needs) can be actualized if eventually, the libraries subscribe to it.

Research Question 3: What are the criteria the libraries consider when selecting e-resources?

The data providing answers to the above research question are presented in table 3 below.

Table 3: Responses to the criteria libraries consider when selecting e-resources for their library.

		Name of institutions				
		UNN	NAU	FUTO	MOUA	OVERALL
		\bar{x}	\bar{x}	\bar{x}	\bar{x}	\bar{x}
		N=16	N=8	N=23	N=6	N=53
1	The frequency of updates, archiving availability, and content embargoes	3.38	3.75	3.65	3.17	3.48
2	Provision of licensing agreements	3.63	3.00	3.48	3.50	3.40
3	The reputation of the provider	3.44	2.88	3.48	3.83	3.41
4	Easy access to the content by the users	3.31	3.25	3.70	3.67	3.48
5	Search capability and functionality of the interface	3.25	3.13	3.48	3.50	2.80
6	Quality of technical support	3.44	3.00	3.26	3.67	3.34
7	Dates of coverage	3.25	3.50	3.35	3.50	3.40
8	the current size of the resource	3.50	3.13	3.30	3.67	3.40
9	Electronic resource well indexed	3.00	2.75	3.17	3.17	3.02
10	Compatibility with existing hardware and software	3.38	2.88	3.17	3.00	3.11
11	The likely users of the resources	3.06	3.13	2.96	3.17	3.08
12	the content of the electronic resource	3.06	2.75	2.70	3.50	3.00
13	Cost	3.25	2.75	3.00	3.17	3.04
	Grand mean	3.30	3.07	3.28	3.42	3.23

Keys: SA-Strongly Agree, A- Agree, D-Disagree, SD-Strongly Disagree

The data presented in table 3 above reveal that the mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on the thirteen (13) items on criteria library consider when selecting e-resources in the library had mean values ranging from 3.07 to 3.42 which are all above the cut-off point of 2.50 on a 4-point rating scale. The above findings indicated that the respondents agreed that all the thirteen (13) items in the table are criteria the federal university libraries in South East Nigeria consider when selecting e-resources in the library.

Also, the overall mean showed that frequency of updates, archiving availability, and content embargoes (mean = 3.48) has the highest ranking, while search capability and functionality of the interface (mean = 2.80) is ranked lowest as criteria libraries consider when selecting e-resources in the library. Also, the interview responses from the four studied federal university libraries also revealed that the university library management considers the coverage of the subjects, frequency of publication and the originality of the titles when selecting any e-resources.

Summary of Findings:

Selection of electronic resources

The responsibility of selection of e-resources indicated that the university librarians, collection development librarians and digital librarians recommend electronic resources for acquisition, but the final selection rest with the university librarian who is the chief collection development librarian. This finding corroborated the works of Edger (2003) who observed that due to the technicality of the e-resources, their selection is not in isolation. Many libraries today are utilizing a team approach in order to achieve a qualitative selection for acquisition. Majority of

the respondents in the libraries under study indicated the university librarian as the main person that is responsible for the final selection of electronic resources.

Tools used to make sound electronic resources selection in federal university libraries in South East Nigeria.

The result revealed that the four federal university libraries under study used all the five (5) identified items as tools used to make sound e-resources selection. This was indicated by the responses which had mean values ranging from 2.75 to 3.20 which are all above the cut-off point of 2.50 on a 4 point rating scale. The interview responses from the four university libraries studied revealed that for a sound selection of electronic resources, the service providers are requested to allow the libraries to use the resources without cost. This will enable them see how the resources work and the general contents of the resource to ensure that the information needs of the users (curriculum needs) can be attained if eventually, the libraries subscribe to it. In considering the tools that guide the libraries in making sound electronic resources decision, it was obvious that the respondents rated the use of trial offers by mounting a link to their resources without cost highest among other tools. Thus the finding of this study corroborated with the study by Yu and Breivold (2008) that enumerated means of evaluating resources for selection to include trail offers, demonstrations, and visits to other libraries.

Criteria the libraries consider when selecting e-resources in federal university libraries in South East Nigeria.

The result revealed that the four federal university libraries under study consider all the criteria thirteen (13) criteria when selecting electronic resources. They include; Frequency of updates, archiving availability, and content embargoes, provision of licensing agreements, the reputation of the provider, easy access to the content by the users, search capability and functionality of the

interface and the like. This was indicated by the responses which had mean values ranging from 3.48 to 2.80 which are all above the cut-off point of 2.50 on a 4 point rating scale.

The finding of this study is in agreement with the study by Yu and Breivold (2008) who listed the above criteria in addition to easy and quick accessibility for users, continuous evaluation and technological and legal concerns as the criteria considered when selecting e-resources. This finding is also in agreement with International Federation of Library Association (IFLA) publication on electronic resources in (2012). IFLA observed that in addition to the criteria that apply to analog materials, electronic publication raise complex issues around licensing, access, networking, pricing, ownership, and rapidly changing technology and standards.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The responsibility of selection indicated that the university librarian is the chief collection development librarian and the overall decision of selection rest with the university librarian in the libraries of the four federal universities in South-East Nigeria which include University of Nigeria Nsukka (UNN), Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka (NAUA), Federal University of Technology Owerri (FUTO), and Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umuahia (MOUUAU). The selection is done in collaboration with the digital/ e-librarians, collection development and serial librarians. It was also revealed that none of the libraries under study has selection team/ committee. The study also revealed that the libraries make use of trial offers by the vendor; prefer to visit similar libraries that already have the product and see it in action there and use of vendor exhibits at conferences as tools for selection of electronic resources. Also, the finding revealed the criteria the library considered in selecting electronic resources in the federal university libraries under study.

Based on the findings the researchers recommend the following;

- That for a balanced and unbiased selection, the libraries should adopt an extensive inclusion of all the stakeholders of the library in selecting electronic resources.
- Also, the libraries should endeavor to set up a selection team/committee responsible for e-resources selection so that a balanced selection will be achieved in university libraries.
- That the appropriate criteria should be considered when selecting electronic resources

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