

Awareness and Use of Electronic Information Resources Among Academic Staff of Port Harcourt Polytechnic, Rumuola, Port Harcourt

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Abstract

The growing awareness, acceptability and usage of Electronic Information Resources (EIRs) among academic staff of Nigerian Universities, have been well documented in a lot of recent studies but there seems to be very little or no study available to help ascertain the current state of EIRs usage among academic staff of Nigerian Polytechnics. This was the primary reason for embarking upon this study. The academic staff of Port Harcourt Polytechnic, Rumuola, Rivers state was selected for the study. The study employed a descriptive survey research at arriving with its findings. The study revealed that the academic staff are fully aware of EIRs and seems to use them regularly. Other findings from the study showed that the academic staff was motivated to use EIRs for research purposes, increased access to a wide range of books, current information among other motivations. Some constraints identified in the use of the EIRs were poor internet connection, inability to access the EIRs from the Institution Library, poor power supply etc. Recommendations were made for the managements of Nigerian Polytechnics to fully integrate EIRs into their institutions in order to help their academic staff fulfill their functions of teaching, learning and researching.

Keywords: Electronic Information Resources (EIRs), Academic staff, Nigerian Polytechnics, Research.

Introduction

The current global surge in the awareness and use of electronic information resources (EIRs) by academics and researchers has brought about significant impact on the educational sector. There is a declining emphasis on an academic or researcher physical presence in the library to use print formats as information needs and resources are now met through a number of options. Today, academic staff can stay at their offices and access online or electronic library resources and services via networks or authentication methods at any time. This has been made possible by rapid developments in Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which have made it possible to store and retrieve information in many different forms and from any place with a computer or an internet enabled device. (Renwick, 2005; Ahmad and Panda, 2013; Encyclopedia Britannica, 2014). Renwick, (2005) states that electronic information resources have exploded in popularity and use. They can and do enable innovation in teaching, and they increase timeliness in research as well as increase discovery and creation of new fields of inquiry. Users often prefer increased access to databases of online-referred journals and to the Web which provides information that is up to the minute, international in scope and sometimes not available elsewhere because they see these resources as easier to access and search.

It is interesting to note that these developments have become parts of the Nigerian higher educational scene especially in academic and research libraries. There are a lot of recent studies and findings on the usage of electronic information resources among various categories of students and academic staff of higher educational institutions. Many of these findings have shown that inspite of the numerous challenges confronting higher education in Nigeria; there is a growing acceptability of EIRs as assets that can assist academics in fulfilling their duties and promoting learning among student. (Okiki and Ashiru, 2011; Okiki, 2012; Omeluzor et al, 2012; Aregbesola and Oguntayo, 2014) etc.

According to Okiki (2012) “the explosion of electronic information resources in the Library has had a significant impact on user’s behavior in the way the Academic community uses, stores, disseminate and preserves information. In the same vein, scholars believe that the increased availability of high-quality electronic content is dramatically changing user behavior. Academic staff members’ attitudes seem to be very positive towards electronic information resources for their study and research and the role of Libraries as gateway to provide assistance in term of awareness and accessing these resources.”

The main function of higher educational institutions in Nigeria is the development of human resources through teaching, learning and research in order to ensure specialization and efficiency in human resources development. This function is carried out at the different levels of academic institutions in Nigeria which include universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. Attama (2013) notes that “the realization of the foregoing functions demands sound academic research for publication output not only for the growth of the individual

academic staff but for both academic institutions and the country at large.”

Yusuf (2012) noted that while Nigerian universities seems to be the main point of higher education research, polytechnics and colleges of education in Nigeria, have now entrenched research as an integral part of their system. Chiemeke et al, (2009) further stated that “research and publication remains a yardstick for promotion in academia in Nigeria. The major area of concern remains the polytechnics, where results from this research have revealed poor research output.” Academic staff of Polytechnics apart from teaching is expected to show proof of research work done in order to advance on the academic career ladder. Research output is an essential aspect of assessment for academic positions. More importantly, Opeke and Odunlade (2011) stated that “Polytechnic lecturers as a group of educators who are in the business of imparting knowledge and promoting students’ learning outcomes and hands on skills need to and must be aware of varieties of information resources available for teaching in their various disciplines in order to enhance the use of such resources. This is because effective utilization of information resources will not only enhance their job performance but also help in self development that will eventually bring about self actualization and even job satisfaction in their areas of specialization”. Furthermore, Opeke and Odunlade insist that “there should be a deliberate effort to create awareness on the availability of various information resources available for teaching and learning in Nigerian Polytechnics, though this is not enough to enhance utilization. Acquisition of necessary information literacy skills to search and evaluate useful materials be it print or electronic is also necessary for resources utilization among Polytechnic lecturers in Nigeria. Therefore, it has become a necessity for academic staff in Nigerian polytechnics to adopt EIRs, which will improve work performance, enhance learning, increase research output and support decision making.

Statement of the Problem

The growing awareness and use of electronic information resources in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria among academic staff has engaged researchers in recent times. This trend needs to be extended specifically to Nigerian Polytechnics. This is because a lot of recent or previous studies have mainly been focused on the Universities. There is very little or virtually nothing to show that Nigerian Polytechnics are taking advantage of this trend that has been accelerated by the continuous effect of ICTs on the educational sector. In other words, not much is known about the state of EIRs awareness and usage by academic staff in Nigerian polytechnics. This lack of information has necessitated the need for this study.

Research Objectives

The Objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the level of awareness of electronic information resources among the academic staff.
2. To assess the frequency of usage of the electronic information resources by the academic staff members.
3. To investigate their motivation for using the electronic information resources
4. To find out constrains encountered by academics in the use of electronic information resources.

Brief History of Port Harcourt Polytechnic

The Port Harcourt Polytechnic was just formerly known as the Rivers State College of Arts and Science. It is one of the two Polytechnics owned by Rivers State. The Polytechnic was established first as a School of Basic studies in 1977, to offer Higher School Certificate/Advanced level GCE, Interim Joint Matriculation Board Examination (IJMBE) moderated by Ahmadu Bello University, Matriculation Examination Programme (MEP) moderated by Rivers State University of Science and Technology and the Remedial Programmes, UTME, JAMB/GCE preparatory classes.

In 1992 due to its success and educational relevance, the School of Basic Studies was converted to Rivers State College of Arts and Science to award College Diploma and Certificates in addition to its original programmes. This conversion provided the opportunities to those who otherwise would have been denied access to tertiary education. The college assumed its Polytechnic status in 2006, when the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) accredited four programmes namely: National Diploma in Accountancy, Statistics, Computer Science and Pre-National Diploma Science. In 2010 the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) granted accreditation to three (3) additional programmes at National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) levels. Following this development Rivers State Government responded to infrastructural challenges/needs of the institution. The Institution can boast of its own E-learning centre and a fully functional ICT centre that co-ordinate the college activities on the internet.

Literature Review

According to the International Federation of Library Associations, (IFLA) (2012) “Electronic information resources refer to those materials that require computer access, whether through a personal computer, mainframe,

or handheld mobile device while they may either be accessed remotely via the Internet or locally.” Okiki and Ashiru (2011) defined EIRS as “products of information and communication technologies and they have been found relevant to the learning and research process in Universities.” Sivathaasan, Murugathas and Chandraseka (2014) identified some types of Electronic information resources to include e-books, digital libraries, online journal, magazine, e-learning tutors, on line test e-journals, e-discussions, e-news, data archives and e-mail online chatting.

Dadzie (2005) stated that electronic resources are invaluable research tools that complement the print – based resources in a traditional library setting. Dadzie further identified some advantages of using EIRs which include: access to information that might be restricted to the user due to geographical location or finances, access to more current information, and provision of extensive links to additional resources related contents. This rapid emergence and development of electronic information technologies therefore makes it possible to envision radically different ways of organizing the collections and services the library has traditionally provided. While libraries approach a crisis point in financing collection development, these new technologies offer possible ways to mitigate costs and revolutionize ways to access information

In tracing the evolution and growth of electronic information resources, Miller (2000) identified various reasons which included general economic factors (such as inflation, weak dollar abroad, increased publishing costs), demands on university budgets (technology, student demographics, staff benefits), and library materials budgets diminishing. This situation was complicated as publishing, fed by university promotion and tenure demands, as well as economic pressures toward mergers and increased profits, expanded in disciplines old and new as well as in a variety of formats. Miller further states that pricing for scholarly journals, the backbone of any academic collection, increased annually by percentages in double digits, with devastating effects on print collections. Similarly, Aregbesola and Oguntayo (2014) noted that “since libraries were facing financial crisis in developing and enriching their collections, the emergence of electronic information resources now provides possible ways for libraries to mitigate costs and revolutionize ways to access information. It appears that electronic databases are convenient for searching huge amounts of data within shortest possible time.”

However, it is important to note that there must be a strong awareness of EIRs before they are acquired and put to use. According to Opeke and Odunlade (2011) awareness of available information resources is very essential for Polytechnic academics or researchers to possess before they can fully utilize or use the intended information resources. They further stated that “Research is replete on awareness and use of information resources. Awareness precedes use. Though, a fundamental factor in information resources utilization is the ‘perceived’ information need, awareness of the existence of an information resource is a major determinant of use. Awareness of the availability of resources is therefore an important variable that has been found to have a positive association with use of information resources.”

Otu, Asante and Martin (2015) while carrying out a study on awareness and utilization of e-journals by faculty of Koforidua Polytechnic Ghana, reported that most of the faculty members are aware of the existence of the e-journal in the polytechnic. However, the hypothesis test on the relationship between awareness and utilization of e-journals, reveals a strong positive correlation (.89) but it was not statistically significant ($P > 0.05$). This meant that, been aware of the existence of e-journals in the institution do not mean that faculty members make use of it. They further reported from their study that e-journals were having significant impact on the teaching and research activities of the Lecturers in the Polytechnic.

Okiki (2012) carried out a study on the use of Electronic Information Resources among academics in University of Lagos. The study revealed that there is a remarkable shift of choice from print information resources to electronic information resources and the presence of EIRS have reduced the number of those who visit the University Library as they can now access the EIRs from their offices. However, he reported that awareness of EIRs was still relatively low but recommended that awareness and orientation should be a continuous effort. Also, Omeluzor et al (2012 while quoting Igbo and Imo (2010), stated that despite the numerous benefits of using EIRs, lack of electronic information resources and irregularity in subscription to electronic journals were identified as some of the factors inhibiting accessibility to electronic information resources.

Research Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design while using a well structured questionnaire as data collection instrument. Descriptive statistical techniques like table of frequency counts and percentages were employed in the analysis. The academic staff of Port Harcourt Polytechnic Rumuola, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria, was the targeted population for the study. They are currently at about three hundred (300). Simple random sampling technique was used. A total of one hundred (100) structured questionnaires were administered of which seventy three (73) copies were duly filled and returned, thereby recording a 73% return rate for data analysis and interpretation.

Analysis and Discussion of Data

Table 1: gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	39	53.4%
Female	34	46.6%
TOTAL	73	100.0%

From table 1, the demographic characteristics of the respondents are displayed. For gender, 39 (53.4%) of the respondents were males while 34 (46.6%) were females. This suggests that there is more male academic staff than the female academic staff in the Polytechnic.

Table 2: Educational qualifications of respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
HND	6	8.2%
Bachelor Degree	28	38.4%
Master's Degree	33	45.2%
PHD	6	8.2%
TOTAL	73	100%

In table 2, the highest educational qualifications of the respondents are displayed with those with Master Degree ranked as the highest with 33 respondents (45.2%). This is followed by those who have Bachelor degree 28 (38.4%) while both the Higher National Diploma and PhD holders came up with 6 (8.2%) each.

Table 3: Years of Teaching Experience of the Respondents

Years of Teaching experience	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	37	50.6 %
6-10	19	26.0%
11 -15	6	8.2%
16 -20	4	5.5%
20 years and above	7	9.7%
TOTAL	73	100%

In the area of years of teaching experience, those with less than five years experience ranked highest with 37 (50.6%) of the respondents. This is followed by those who have taught in the Polytechnic between 6-10 years with 19 (26%) and those who have spent over twenty years with 7 (9.7%). Those who have teaching experience between 11-15 years came next with 6 (8.2%) while those with 16-20 teaching experience came last with 4 (5.5%) of the respondents.

Table 4: Awareness of electronic information resources

Types of EIRs	YES	%	NO	%	TOTAL (%)
E-Books	71	97.3%	2	2.7%	73 (100%)
E-Journals	70	96%	3	4%	73 (100%)
Online database	70	96%	3	4%	73 (100%)
Institutional Repository	53	73%	20	27%	73 (100%)
CD-ROM	70	96%	3	4%	73 (100%)

In table 4, awareness of the E-book came highest with 71 ((97.3%) while those of E-journal, Online database and CD-ROM recorded 70 (96%) responses each. Institutional repository had the least response concerning the awareness of the electronic information resources with 53 (73%) responses while 20 (27%) responded that they were not aware of the institutional repository.

Table 5: Frequency on the use of the EIRs

Types of EIRs	Daily (%)	Weekly (%)	Monthly (%)	Occasionally (%)	Not sure (%)	TOTAL (%)
E-book	18 (24.7%)	30 (41.1%)	5 (6.8%)	18 (24.7%)	2 (2.7%)	73 (100%)
E-journal	12 (16.4%)	37 (50.8%)	9 (12.3%)	12 (16.4%)	3 (4.1 %)	73 (100%)
Online Database	30 (41.1%)	14 (19.2%)	6 (8.2%)	22 (30.1%)	1 (1.4%)	73 (100%)
Institutional Repository	3 (4%)	9 (12.3%)	18 (24.7%)	23 (32%)	20 (27%)	73 (100%)
CD-ROM	5 (7%)	12 (16.4%)	6 (8.2%)	47 (64.4%)	3 (4%)	73 (100%)

In table 5, the frequencies on the usage of these EIRs were investigated. For daily usage, online

database was mostly used with 30 (41.1%) responses followed by the E-book which had 18 (24.7%) responses. E-journal comes next with 12 (16.4%) responses while the CD- ROM and Institutional repository had 5(7%) and 3(4%) responses. This table revealed that the E-journal is mostly used on a weekly basis with 37 (50.8%) responses while the institutional repository is the least used EIR consulted weekly. For monthly usage, Institutional Repository is mostly used with 18 (24%) responses, followed by the E-journal with 9 (12.3%) responses while online database and CD-ROM had 6(8.2%) responses each. Coming last is the E-book with 5 (6.8%) responses.

Table 6: Motivations for using EIRs

Motivation	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Not Sure (%)	TOTAL (%)
Provides platform of having access to wide range of books	69 (94.5%)	4 (5.5%)	-	73 (100%)
Access to reliable information resources	67 (91.7%)	2 (2.8%)	4 (5.5%)	73 (100%)
It increases access to current materials	71 (97.2%)	2 (2.8%)	-	73 (100%)
For Research purposes	71 (97.2%)	-	2 (2.8%)	73 (100%)
Information retrieval is quick and immediate	56 (76.7%)	15 (20.5%)	2 (2.8%)	73 (100%)
There is access from my comfort zone	56 (76.7%)	17 (23.3%)	-	73 (100%)
Enables one to make use of library resources remotely and outside opening hours	54 (73.9%)	17 (23.3%)	2 (2.8%)	73 (100%)

Table 6 reveals the motivations for using the EIRs. Increased access to current materials and using EIRs for research purposes recorded the highest response rate with both having 71 (97.2%) of the respondents each. 69 (94.5%) respondents agreed that EIRs provides platform of having access to wide range of books while 67 (91.7%) respondents agreed that EIRs provides access to reliable information resources. Coming next was 56 (76.7%) responses for both Information retrieval is quick and immediate and there is access from my comfort zone. 54 (73.9%) agreed that EIRs enables one to make use of library resources remotely and outside opening hours.

Table 7: Constraints in the use of the EIRs

Constraints	Agreed (%)	Disagreed (%)	Not Sure (%)	TOTAL (%)
Lack of awareness	42 (57.5%)	8 (11.0%)	23 (31.5%)	73 (100%)
Unfriendly User Interface	53 (72.6%)	14 (19.2%)	6 (8.2%)	73 (100%)
Poor Internet Connection	65 (89.1%)	3 (4.1%)	5 (6.8%)	73 (100%)
Poor power Supply	39 (53.5%)	11 (15%)	23 (31.5%)	73 (100%)
Poor searching skills	38 (52.1%)	23 (31.5%)	12 (16.4%)	73 (100%)
Lack of training to improve usage	48 (65.8%)	15 (20.5%)	10 (13.7%)	73 (100%)
Inadequate or Non availability of the facilities to access the EIRs in my Institution's library	62 (85.0%)	6 (8.2%)	5 (6.8%)	73 (100%)

In Table 7, some constraints in the use of the EIRs were identified by the respondents. Poor internet connection was regarded as the biggest constraint as 65 (89.1%) of the respondents stated their agreement with this constraint. The next mostly agreed constraint is inadequate or non availability of the facilities to access the EIRs in the Institution's library. Poor power supply and poor searching skills were regarded as the least constraints as they recorded 39 (53.5%) and 38 (52.1%) respondents respectively.

Conclusion

In concluding this study, it is an established fact that the emergence of Electronic Information Resources (EIRs) has become very essential in the academic and research activities of Nigerian higher institutions of learning especially among the Universities and Polytechnics. It is impressive to note that there is a growing awareness of the importance and benefits of using EIRs among academic staff of Nigerian Tertiary institutions. Judging from the data collected and analyzed, the Port Harcourt Polytechnic has a relatively young academic staff, and the use of EIRs has become inevitable because the advancing effects of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) has made it mandatory that Graduates of Nigerian higher institutions must be computer literate and proficient in adapting to latest trends. The study showed that the academic staff of the Port Harcourt Polytechnic is fully aware of Electronic Information Resources such as e-book, e-journal, online database, CD ROM etc. It also showed that majority of the respondent uses online database on a daily basis to get relevant information. Moreover, the staff use of EIRs was motivated due to the increased access to current materials, research purposes, access to wide range of books, access to reliable information resources, quick and immediate Information retrieval and access from comfort zone. This is in line with the study carried out by Okiki (2012) who found out that there is a remarkable shift of choice from print information resources to electronic information resources and the presence of EIRS have reduced the number of those who visit the University Library as they can now access the EIRs from their offices.

However, the main challenges identified were poor internet connection and the inadequate or non availability of the facilities to access the EIRs in the institution's library.

Recommendations

The following recommendations drawn by the researchers from their findings are hereby forwarded to the management of Port Harcourt Polytechnic in particular and to other Nigerian Polytechnics experiencing the same challenges:

- The management of Port Harcourt Polytechnic should make more efforts at improving internet connection which will enhance the academic staff access to EIRs.
- It is not enough to flood a corner of the library with computers and tag it E-library. The uniqueness of an e-library is the availability of the EIRs that can be accessed on the computers. Therefore, efforts should be geared towards providing for more facilities and subscriptions to access EIRs especially in the Polytechnic Library.
- Individual and collective arrangements should be made for adequate user training and advanced search strategies, which are essential for better use of electronic information resources among the academic staff.
- There should also be adequate information to increase the awareness and use of EIRs among Port Harcourt Polytechnic academic staff.
- Finally, the governing council or management should try to provide constant power supply by making alternative arrangement for power supply as this was one of the major constraints in using EIRs in Port Harcourt Polytechnic.

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