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## Institutional Repository Awareness amongst Library and Information Science Students of Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria

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# **Institutional Repository Awareness amongst Library and Information Science Students of Federal Polytechnic Offa, Kwara State, Nigeria**

## **Introduction**

Repositories are often mentioned in connection with the open access movement, which allows unrestricted access to digital content devoid of limitations; ordinarily, they stock the scholarly resources of an institution and are being considered very vital to scholarly communication, university ranking and institutional visibility (Adewumi, 2012, Elaturoti, 2018, Kakai, 2018). They (that is, IRs) are basically used for the acquisition, preservation and dissemination of locally-generated scholarly information (Nunda and Elia, 2019).

An institutional repository goes beyond being a store house for works done in an institution; it is also a set of services that such institution (university, polytechnic, or any other) renders to members of its community including the management and dissemination of digital materials created by it and its community members. Ibrahim (2019) is of the opinion that institutional repositories play an important role in safeguarding the huge intellectual resources of authors which often get lost on several scattered external storage devices and also ensure their conservation as institutional knowledge bases for faculty members, students and other stakeholders. To him, they have the possibility of increasing the: visibility, accessibility and impact of research in Africa.

Further, they provide a means of disseminating the research output of faculty members and also enable them, their students and other information users to consult and cite such works. Quoting Armstrong (2014), Ibrahim (2019) expressed that the dissemination of research is a central mission for institutions all over the world. Additionally, Clifford Lynch (2003) opined that an institutional repository is the outcome of efforts made by an institution to gather scholarly

publications from within its community in digital formats; preserve and organize them appropriately and make them accessible and retrievable for further research and studies.

The Federal Polytechnic, Offa came into existence in 1992 after a presidential pronouncement of its establishment at the palace of the then Olofa of Offa, His Royal Highness, late Oba Mustapha Olawoore Olanipekun Ariwajoye II, by the Military President at that time, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida, during a state visit in 1991. The vision of the institution is to train skillful, knowledgeable, industrious and technological manpower needed for sustainable national development. The Polytechnic has twenty-five (25) programmes offered at National Diploma (ND) level, eighteen (18) at Higher National Diploma (HND) level as well as Pre-ND programmes in Arts and Science. There are over fifteen thousand (15,000) students presently enrolled in the institution at all the different levels (source: <https://www.fpo.edu.ng/innerPages.php?pageID=5>). Currently, the polytechnic has six schools which coordinate the academic activities of the different departments of the institution including the department of Library and Information Science and several administrative units which offer support services in the institution (Onaolapo, 2016).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Institutional repositories collect and preserve the scholarly output (theses, dissertations, seminar papers, conference proceedings, preprints, post prints, working papers, technical reports, and other documents) of an academic institution in a digital format (Eromosele, 2019). They can also house the administrative output of the institution such as reports, directories, and local archival documentation. According to Ibrahim (2019), there is a global adoption of institutional repositories as an information technology infrastructure to facilitate teaching, learning and

research among staff and students in an efficient manner. This global acceptance is as a result of the several benefits which the institutions, users and researchers stand to gain by adopting them.

But in spite of the perceived benefits, the continent of Africa is one of the regions of the world where the adoption and implementation of this technology has been slow due to factors including (but not limited to) lack of skilled manpower, infrastructural facilities, funding and lack of awareness or knowledge of institutional repositories. Malekani and Kavishe (2018) identified some of the hindrances to the adoption of institutional repositories, which include non-commitment by faculty members (mainly research fellows and academics) towards self-archiving of their publications; inadequate publications for deposition in the repository, which originates from lack of equipment (like scanners) to digitize hard copies of the publications for uploading in the repository. In many cases, faculty members and students continue to lose valuable information assets like videos, audios, datasets, research works in progress, unpublished and published works, lecture notes and students assignments which they fail or are unable to deposit in the repository.

In Nigeria, the idea of institutional repositories (IRs) is a technological development that is yet to be fully embraced; a relatively new theme in tertiary institutions that have seen them as a necessity for making available their institutional resources, thereby increasing their visibility and better performance in the ongoing web ranking of world universities. In the last few years, specifically, Nigerian universities have, more or less, competed among themselves to have higher position in the webometrics ranking of universities globally (Oye et al. 2020). Conversely, most polytechnics in the country have neither embraced nor explored institutional repositories as well as their usefulness; and the gap between the two categories of tertiary institutions (that is, polytechnics and universities) is getting wider (Oni et al, 2019). Hence, there is need for

polytechnics to imitate the universities by investing in the establishment of institutional repositories.

Ogbomo and Muokebe (2015) averred that one of the major barriers faced by scholars and researchers is the lack of access to current literature in their field; institutional repositories have evolved as one of the solutions to this problem. They (that is, institutional repositories) can be: searched for any phrase, accessed all over the world and copied without error; as such they address the traditional problems of: finding information, delivering it to users, and preserving it for future use.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study were to:

1. determine whether Library and Information Science students of Federal Polytechnic, Offa were aware of institutional repositories or not;
2. find out the availability of an institutional repository in Federal Polytechnic, Offa;
3. identify the sources of information about institutional repository existence at Federal Polytechnic, Offa;
4. assess the attitude of Library and Information Science students of Federal Polytechnic, Offa towards institutional repositories.

### **Research questions**

Answers were sought to the following research questions during the study:

1. Are Library and Information Science students of Federal Polytechnic, Offa aware of institutional repositories?
2. Does Federal Polytechnic, Offa have an institutional repository?

3. What are the students' sources of information on institutional repository existence at Federal Polytechnic, Offa?
4. What is the attitude of Library and Information Science students of Federal Polytechnic, Offa towards institutional repositories?

### **Literature Review**

Tertiary institutions in Nigeria (universities, polytechnics and others in such category) are responding to global changes in scholarship, research and technology by adopting institutional repositories (IRs) as part of improvements in their various domains. Umar et al (2014) considered IR as a benchmark of digital scholarship. Velmurugan and Radhakrishnan (2014) quoting Ware (2004), defined an institutional repository (IR) as a web-based database (repository) of scholarly material which is: institutionally defined (as opposed to a subject-based repository); cumulative and perpetual (a collection of records); open and interoperable (for instance, using Open Access Initiative (OAI)-compliant software; and thus collects, stores and propagates scholarly communication.

The most frequently cited definition of an institutional repository is that of Lynch (2003) who defined it as a set of services that an academic institution offers for the management and dissemination of digital materials created by the institution and its community members. It is most essentially an organizational commitment to the stewardship of these digital materials, including long-term preservation where appropriate, as well as organization and access or distribution. Something noteworthy about this definition is the emphasis on long-term preservation. Since preserving digital information, which can be prepared in a wide variety of formats (for example HTML, or PDF), is not simple and the long-term costs of doing so are

basically unknown, it is not surprising when an institution is committed to preserving all these diverse and ever changing formats forever.

To Sankar and Kavitha (2018), institutional repositories are the electronic archive of scientific and scholarly output of an institution, stored in digital format, where search and recovery are allowed for its subsequent use. Consequently, the concept of institutional repository is understood as an information system that collects, preserves, disseminates and provides access to the intellectual output of the academic community; a digital store of the intellectual product created by the faculty, research staff, and also students of an institution, that is made accessible to end-users both within and outside the institution with little or no barriers to access. It also houses experimental and observational data captured by members of the institution that support their scholarly endeavours.

Institutional repositories are essential to tertiary institutions in managing and capturing their intellectual assets; they provide: interconnectivity to repositories of other institutions; and machine processable data to support tertiary institutions in their quest for excellence. In the views of Murugathas and Balasooriya (2015), an institutional repository can do the following:

- serve as a publisher of research materials such as theses, peer reviewed papers, working papers, lecture notes, memorial lectures, keynote addresses and other types of grey literature;
- give value to the research and scholarly works of an institution thus encouraging more publications; and
- serve as a stimulating factor for students to ensure genuineness in their academic project knowing that it will be stored and made accessible to the public.

Additionally, if the research output of an entire institution is collected in a repository, the administrators can easily scan through to know what is being produced, by whom, when and where output is being published, thus becoming a means of evaluating the strength(s) and weakness(es) of the institution. It can aid effective marketing of the institution by showcasing it to the world thus projecting it to interested parties such as prospective staff, students and researchers as well. Researchers want to be cited and quoted, they want their colleagues to make comments about and recommend their work, they also want to be commended; institutional repositories can enhance these greatly. The success of an institution is to an extent judged by the volume and quality of research output (Holland & Denning, 2011). Therefore, an IR helps capture institutions' achievements and areas of upgrading and hence enhances their upward ranking, the criteria of which include web presence and visibility.

Furthermore, Jain (2012) sees the institutional repository as an effective vehicle to information exchange between and among countries; maybe because of the fact that libraries are underfunded by governments in many countries. This opinion corroborates that of Frandsen (2009) who concluded that open access repositories have made easier the path to information for researchers from developing countries who have limited access to scholarly materials because of the high costs of journals. It was further discovered that as a result of features such as reduced cost and unrestricted access, the repositories, as option, enjoy higher level of acceptance among many academic institutions. Velmurugan (2010) understands IR as a new and innovative channel of scholarly communication that provides wider access and visibility to the research output of the parent body; it: preserves the institution's heritage, reduces publication delay, strengthens researches, serves as a boon for the visibility and accessibility of grey materials and also, a faster and effective communication channel that increases the citation to publications. Lynch, (2003)



further suggests that another benefit academics stand to gain from embracing IR is the stewardship and preservation of their publication because of its digital form and this saves them from the need to maintain or keep the content on a personal computer.

Bamigbola and Adetimirin (2017) expressed that awareness comes first before usage of any object. Citing Dutta and Paul (2014), they opined that in the open access environment, awareness is considered an important factor determining usage of this mode of scholarly communication. The use of IR is based on the awareness of IR existence, its purposes and benefits. A very important issue to consider about institutional repositories is awareness of their existence and willingness to use them. For an IR to be successful and serve its full potential, it is imperative that its constituents be aware of its existence, understand its value, and be willing to contribute their scholarship (Yang and Li, 2015). In the views of Ivwighreghweta (2012), knowledge of open access institutional repositories is very low among the major stakeholders in developing regions like Africa and one of the best ways to promote its development in the region is through advocacy. For such advocacy to be really effective, it must be undertaken by the stakeholders (including students and faculty members) (Ivighreghweta, 2012).

## **Methodology**

The study adopted the survey research design. Embracing Avedian's definition, a survey is a systematic method for gathering information from (a sample of) entities for the purposes of constructing quantitative descriptors of the attributes of the larger population of which the entities are members and gathering information that reflects the population's attitudes, behaviors, opinions and beliefs that cannot be observed directly (Avedian, 2014). Hence, survey research design was adopted because it enabled the researchers to gather comprehensive data which in turn helped in carrying out thorough research. It also enabled the researchers to deduce opinions

of the randomly selected respondents within a relatively short period of time .A sample of one hundred and fifty (150) respondents was randomly selected from the population of study, which comprised of students of Library and Information Science Department of Federal Polytechnic, Offa, Kwara State. Opinions of students drawn from both Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) programmes at all levels were sought on issues relating to their knowledge of institutional repositories and its availability in their institution.

Data were collected through the use of questionnaire. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions for the purpose of gathering information from respondents (McLeod, 2018). McLeod opined that questionnaires provide a relatively cheap, quick and efficient way of obtaining large amounts of information from a large sample of people; and also that data can be collected relatively quickly because the researcher would not need to be present when the questionnaires were completed. The researchers decided to use questionnaire because of these obvious advantages as listed by McLeod (2018).

Copies of the questionnaire were self-administered on the one hundred and fifty (150) respondents selected using simple random sampling method, but only one hundred and twenty-one (121) copies were returned and the analysis and discussion of results were based on these. Data were analyzed by means of simple frequencies and percentages and presented in tabular form.

## **Findings and Discussion**

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents by gender**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Male	66	54.5 %
Female	55	45.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 above reveals that the majority of the respondents were males with a frequency of sixty-six (66) or 54.5% while the rest were females with a frequency of fifty-five (45.5%).

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents by level of study in the institution**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
ND I	16	13.2
ND II	3	2.5
HND I	67	55.4
HND II	35	28.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>

It could be seen from Table 2 above that the largest percentage of the respondents were students from Higher National Diploma year one (HNDI) with 55.4% (that is sixty-seven) respondents, followed by those in Higher National Diploma year two (HNDII) with 28.9% (thirty-five) while those at the Ordinary National Diploma Levels I and II (NDI and NDII) were 13.2% (16) and 2.5% (3) respectively.

**Research question 1: Are Library and Information Science students of Federal Polytechnic, Offa aware of institutional repositories?**

**Table 3: Awareness of institutional repositories by Library and Information Science students of Federal Polytechnic, Offa.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	96	79.3
No	25	20.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 above presents information on awareness of Library and Information Science students of Federal Polytechnic, Offa about institutional repositories. It reveals that majority of

the respondents, ninety-six (79.3%) were aware of institutional repositories while twenty-five (20.7%) indicated they were not aware. It could, therefore, be deduced that majority of students from the Department of Library and Information Science of Federal Polytechnic, Offa were aware of the concept of institutional repositories. This contradicts the opinion of Iwighrehweta (2012) that knowledge of institutional repository is very low among the major stakeholders (which students are a part) in developing regions.

**Research question 2: Does Federal Polytechnic, Offa have an institutional repository?**

**Table 4: Availability of an institutional repository at Federal Polytechnic, Offa**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Yes	71	58.7
No	13	10.7
I do not know	37	30.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4 above presents information on the availability of an institutional repository at Federal Polytechnic, Offa. From the table, it could be seen that the largest percentage of the respondents (71 or 58.7%) indicated that an institutional repository was available in their institution, another thirteen (13 or 10.7%) indicated it was not available while the remaining thirty-seven (37 or 30.6%) indicated they did not know whether there was an institutional repository in their school or not. This finding agrees with the views of Yang and Li (2015) that it is very important that the constituent of an IR be aware of its existence and understands its value for it to be successful and serve its full potential. However, the institution’s library management has more to do in the area of publicizing the institutional repository so that knowledge or awareness of its availability (and eventual usage) would extend to the rest of the students’ community also.

**Research question 3: What are the sources of information on institutional repository existence at Federal Polytechnic, Offa?**

**Table 5: Sources of information about institutional repository existence at Federal Polytechnic, Offa.**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Library/Librarian	22	18.2
Colleagues/Friends	14	11.6
Lectures/Lecturers	40	33.1
Through Internet	16	13.2
Mass Media	5	4.1
No response	24	19.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 5 above makes it clear that majority of the respondents became aware of institutional repositories through lectures and lecturers as disclosed by 33.1% or forty (40) of them. Others indicated they learnt about it from sources such as library/librarian (18.2% or 22), Internet (13.2% or 16), colleagues/friends (11.6% or 14) and mass media (4.1% or 5); while twenty-four (24) or 19.8% did not respond to the question at all. This finding supports that of Ivwighrehweta (2012) who found that IR awareness could be achieved through advocacy, which must be undertaken by the stakeholders (including students and faculty members) for it to be effective.

**Research question 4: What is the attitude of Library and Information Science students of Federal Polytechnic, Offa towards institutional repositories?**

**Table 6: IR services are a good idea**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage(%)</b>
Strongly Agree	58	47.9
Agree	32	26.5
Disagree	23	19.0
Strongly Disagree	8	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 6 above shows the distribution of the extent to which respondents believed IR was a good idea. 47.9% (fifty-eight) of the respondents strongly agreed that IR was a good idea while 26.5% (thirty-two) of them indicated ‘Agree’ on IR being a good idea. The others: 13.2%, 5.8% and 6.6 % were neutral, disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement respectively. This finding tallies with the views of Murugathas and Balasooriya (2015); Jain (2012) and Frandsen (2009) on their findings that institutional repositories were a good idea, which could be attributed to the several benefits institutions, faculty members and students stood to gain from having them, for example enhancing activities like preserving, discovering, controlling and reusing institutional intellectual contents as well as the provision of avenues for contents’ dissemination and use, access to information at greatly reduced cost, and so on.

**Conclusion**

An institutional repository goes beyond being a store house for works done in an institution it is most essentially an organizational commitment to the stewardship of these digital materials, which include their long-term preservation, organization, access as well as their distribution or use at greatly reduced cost. Though students from the Department of Library and Information Science, Federal Polytechnic, Offa were quite aware of institutional repositories and that their institution had one and also had a positive attitude towards their existence, a lot still has

to be done in the area of advocacy to guarantee wider adoption and usage amongst them in their academics.

## **Recommendations**

Arising from the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. On the part of the institutional management, the creation of more awareness and advocacy on institutional repositories amongst Polytechnic students (and even lecturers), for example, through seminars, workshops, conferences, social media and other avenues;
2. The library, which is an ideal host of the IR, should rise up to its responsibilities by creating awareness and educating users as well as the potential depositors on the need, importance and value of IR.
3. Increased funding from government to assist academic institutions in Nigeria, particularly polytechnics which are still lagging behind in the development and usage of institutional repositories to uplift the state of their Information and Communication Technology infrastructure to further aid them in developing IRs.

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