

Availability and accessibility of e-books in Nigerian libraries: A survey**Information Impact:**Journal of Information and
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ISSN: 2360 – 994X (e-version)**Nafisa Rabi***University of Ilorin, Nigeria***Njideka Nwawih Ojukwu***Federal University Lokoja, Nigeria***Popoola Biliamin Oladele***University of Medical Science, Nigeria***Abstract**

This paper investigates availability and accessibility of e-books in Nigerian Libraries. A social survey method of research was adopted for the study and the questionnaire as a research instrument was used. A systematic random sampling technique was used to determine respondents in the survey. The result shows that e-books penetration in libraries is still very low. The study also reveals that respondents accessed both paid for and free e-books. Challenges identified include embargo period, issues of payment per loan basis, re-licensing title etc. The study recommends that library stakeholders should lobby government and publishers to highlight the importance of access to affordable e-books in Nigerian libraries.

Keywords: E-Books, Accessibility, Availability, Nigerian libraries**Introduction**

The term e-book is used variously in the literature to refer to hardware, software and document content. Whereas from the user perspective, an e-book is frequently viewed as a dedicated reading device and not as the associated content, according to a survey on e-book features undertaken by Henke (2002). Hawkins (2000) states that “an e-book is the contents of a book made available in an electronic form”. But Lynch and Tenny (1999) stress the need to distinguish between a digital book (the content) and the viewing technology (hardware and software) Hawkins (2000)

outlines three true electronic publishing implementations of the e-book format to which can be added, the dimension of proprietary and non-proprietary technology. More so, an electronic book is commonly referred to an e-book, and is simply a print book in an electronic format. E-book can be produced in numerous format that range from very basic text files to well structured, purpose built files that use one of the emerging standards for e-book such as the e-pub and Adobe PDF standards. (Payare & Lal, 2014), affirmed that from the day of its introduction, libraries realized the importance of e-book and made them as

part of their collection development. Libraries acquire e-books through subscription or purchase licences policies and provide them to the user via library OPAC, website etc. (Hermon, 2007).

A recent study conducted by Folb (2011) assessed the factors affecting use of e-books by all patron groups of the Health Sciences Library System. A total of 871 patrons completed the survey, for an approximate response rate of 18.5%. The results indicated that library e-books were used by 55.4% of respondents and that, in general, respondents preferred print for textbooks and manuals and electronic format for research protocols and reference books. In spite of little promotion, 65.5% were aware of the e-book collection. Great awareness was also reported by Gunter (2005). He found that 85% of the users surveyed in the UK were aware of e-books. The student, faculty, and staff population of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign was surveyed regarding their awareness, usage, or lack thereof, and opinions about e-books. Shelburne (2009) received 1,547 responses. Fifty seven percent of these reported that they had used e-books. Approximately 41% of respondents who had not used e-books indicated it was because they did not know they were available, 15% that they did not like to

read from the screen, 10% stated that they did not know how to find e-books, and 7% that they had a preference for printed books. The results show that users considered e-books better than print books in terms of space and storage, accessibility 24/7, currency of information, and availability from any location. One of the most comprehensive e-books use surveys ever conducted (Nicholas et.al, 2008) involved 22,437 subjects in the UK. The study shows that e-book penetration was very strong, 61.8% of all students were already using them in connection with their scholarly work. According to the authors, the e-book revolution had already happened. Dillon (2001) reported that students from the University of Texas at Austin mostly refer to e-books in the fields of economics, business and computer science followed by medicine and health. McCarty (2001) revealed that students at the University of Colorado Boulder Libraries used e-books for research and found it convenient, when searching for information. Healy (2002) interviewed 3, 200 faculty members, undergraduates as well as graduate students and observed that e-books were used for research, teaching and learning.

Anderson (2001), who surveyed 1500 US online Internet users, found that those who frequent the Internet also rated e-book positively and they tended to be between

the ages of 25 and 29. Some of the respondents indicated that e-books would be most useful if it is portable.

A Report on the Survey of the eBooks and e-Lending in African Countries by Margaret Allen and Sarah Kaddu (2014) revealed that the sources of eBooks include: open access, library subscriptions, websites, Google, online book stores such as Amazon, itunes, and courtesy of world readers. He also, found out that majority of the respondents (52%) indicated that they were accessing both paid for and free eBooks, those who access paid for eBooks only were 1 (5%), and those who access free eBooks were 9 (43%).

Problems associated with e-books

Hurdles to using e-books beyond discovery and preference include poor user interface, login requirement, and digital right management issues. In addition, the difficulty in downloading or printing portions of an e-book was cited as a problem by Cassidy et al (2012) and Shelburne (2009).while interface issues have improved over time, Walters (2013) encouraged librarians to work with publishers to find a model that works for users.

Other problem faced when using e-books according to Shelburne, (2009); Cassidy et al (2012), and Muir & Hawes

(2013) include difficulty in simultaneously referring to multiple texts. Researchers that need to refer to multiple texts may prefer print. Additionally, accessibility issues were evident such as when reading sessions timed-out for inactivity before the users was finished reading. They also noted that accessibility issues with respect to functionality on different devices. Students lacked context when landing on an unfamiliar page resulting from a search within text function (Muir & Hawas, 2013). Woody and Daniel (2013) reported distraction when reading from a screen where one has access to e- mail and social media.

More generally, there is a clear need for better selection tools. As Sarah Thompson and Steve Sharp (2009) have noted, the lack of a single cross-publisher database an “E-books in Print” makes it difficult to confirm “which titles are available as e-books, which platforms they are available on, and what they cost.” In practice, selectors tend to rely on both Amazon and their library vendors’ databases. However, the absence of reliable selection tools remains a significant problem in identifying the e-books that are most relevant for academic libraries as noted by Sarah Thompson and Steve sharp (2009). E-book embargoes are especially problematic for library approval plans, if

an approval plan includes print and e-book editions, the notification for a print edition may arrive several months before the e-book notification. In that situation, the selector is likely to choose print even if the library has made a commitment to e-books. On the other hand, an “e-book only” approval plan is likely to delay the acquisition of important titles.

Unlike print books, e-books are leased rather than purchased. Publishers and vendors offer three kinds of e-book leases:

- ✓ Annual access: The library pays an annual fee for one year’s access. The lease can be renewed each year.
- ✓ Perpetual access: The library pays a one-time fee. There may also be an annual platform fee.
- ✓ Pay per use: The library is billed, or debited from a prepaid account, based on the number of uses (titles viewed, pages viewed, etc.). There may be an annual platform fee.

There is no doubt that an interesting part of the e-book phenomenon is that they offer a new type of user experience for reading books that provide potential benefits such as new ways to access a book catalogue and flexible choices for delivery. The potential for interactivity (e.g. hyper linking) and the inclusion of multimedia, is where they differ from traditional print

based book and is where they can possibly have an advantage to support learning and teaching (Payare, 2014). He goes further to explain that print book is commonly linear and with limited features; a content list, content and an index, an e-book is structured like web page providing the reader with additional features that enable fast navigation through hyper linking, annotation and keyword searches supporting multiple reader journeys through the content. It is these features that will be of interest to those thinking of building their own e-book. It can also be delivered or accessed via a number of channels; the delivery methods are emails or download, either from a repository or e-book store. E-Book are viewed using e-reader, which may be either desktop software or by using a mobile device.

The integration of e-books in academic libraries is beneficial as they are remotely accessible and available around the clock, potentially can lead to saving physical space in the library, prevention from book lost and damage, and easier integration to Virtual Learning Environments (Jamali, Nicholas & Rowlands 2009). However there is the need to investigate the choices for making an effective use of e-books, therefore the aim of this study is to survey availability and accessibility of e-books in Nigeria libraries.

Research questions

1. What are the level of availability and accessibility of e-Books in Nigeria Libraries?
2. Who are the users of your library?
3. What are the sources of e-Books in your libraries?
4. Are you accessing free e-Books, paid or both?
5. What are the challenges facing e-Books in Nigeria Libraries?

Methodology

This study was carried out using a social survey method. The research instrument adopted for the study was questionnaire. The instrument was structured to assess relevant information about availability and accessibility of e-books in Nigeria libraries. It was validated using expert opinion. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test-retest method. Fifteen questionnaires were administered to librarians in Abuja the capital city of Nigeria. The completed questionnaire was

returned and re-administered to the same set of librarians, and the responses were the same with the previous ones. The population of the study was the 530 certified librarians of Nigeria from various libraries across the countries that were inducted by the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) on 13th October, 2015. A systematic random sampling was used to select the librarians involved in the survey. The questionnaire was administered to one out of every three librarians being inducted on the day. A total of 315 questionnaires were distributed to librarians and 273, representing 87% response rate, were completed and returned. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistical tools such as, bar chart, tables, percentages and frequency distribution.

Findings and discussion

The total number of duly completed and returned questionnaire copies was two hundred and seventy three (273).

Figure 1: Gender distribution of respondents

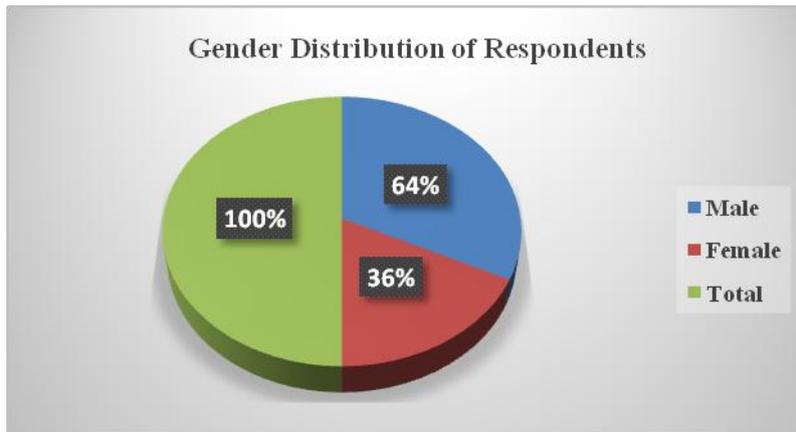
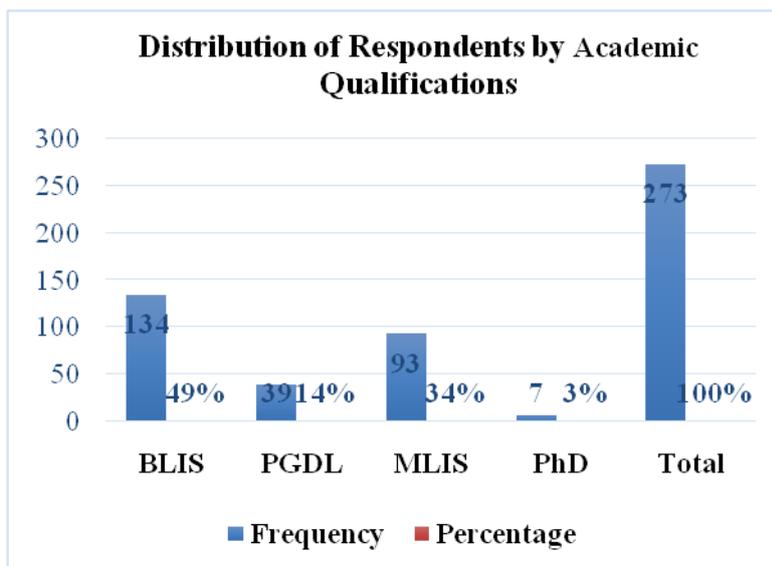


Figure 1: Showed that 39% of respondents are male while 61% are female. This represents the gender distribution of respondents involved in the survey

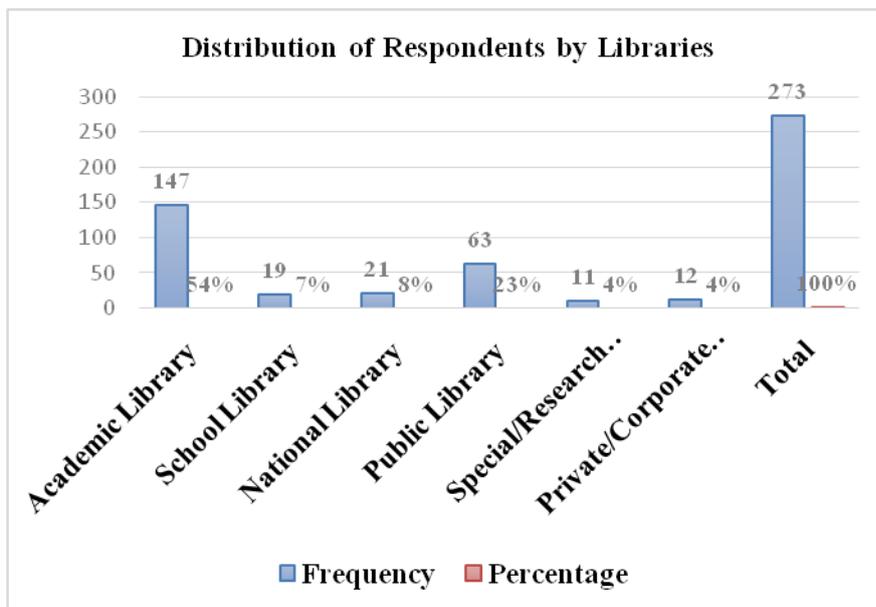
Figure 2: Distribution of respondents by academic qualifications



As observed from figure 2, majority (49%) of the respondents have first degree in library science whereas 34% had masters in library science while 14% had post

graduate diploma in library science and 3% had doctor of Philosophy in library science.

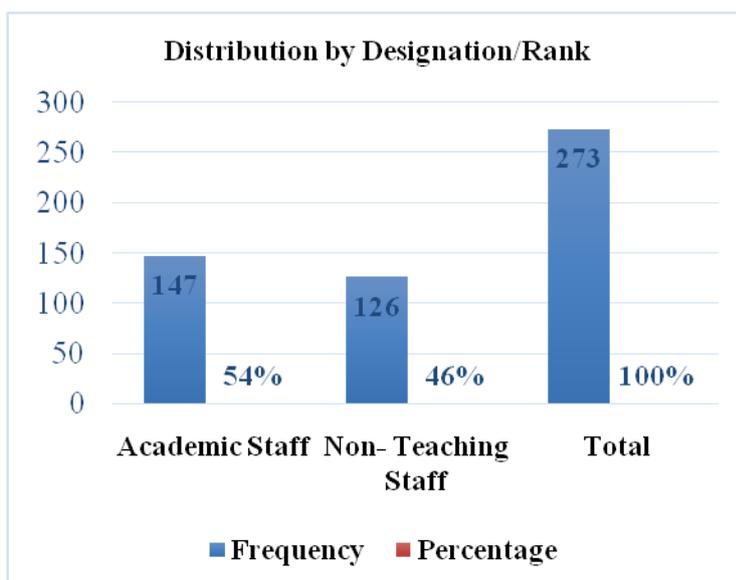
Figure 3: Distribution of respondents by libraries



As noted above, respondents in the survey cut across the different types of libraries that are available in Nigeria. A larger percentage, 54% of the respondents are from academic libraries while other

categories were equally represented. This includes public libraries 23% while National library 8% whereas school libraries were 7% while private/ corporate and special/research libraries were 4%.

Figure 4: Distribution by designation/rank



As observed from figure 4, majority (54%) of the participants were academics staff while 46% of participants were non-

teaching staff. It could therefore be deduced from the data that majority of participants were academic staff.

Figure 5: Level of availability of e-books in Nigeria library

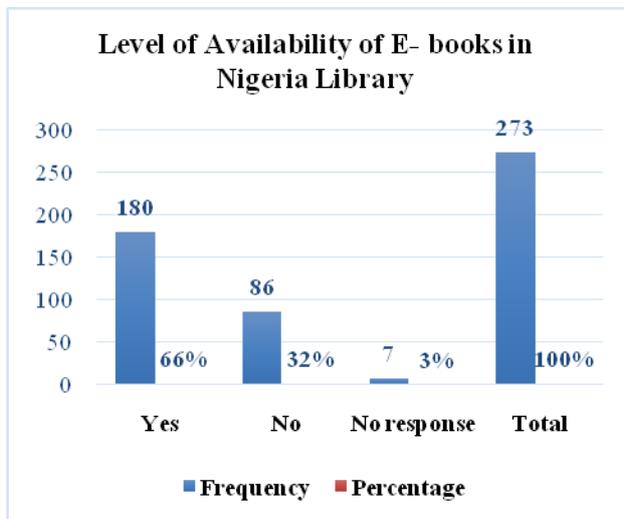


Fig 5 shows that majority 66% of the participants attest that e-books are available in their libraries whereas 32% of the participants indicate that e-books are not available in their libraries while 7% of

the participants are not respond. It could be concluded that availability and accessibility of e-books in libraries are yet to be available and accessible to all libraries in Nigeria.

Figure 6: Level of accessibility of e-books in Nigeria library

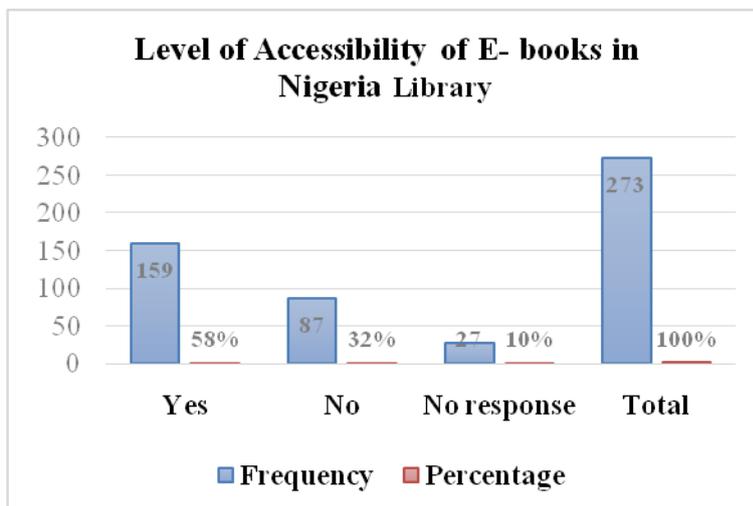
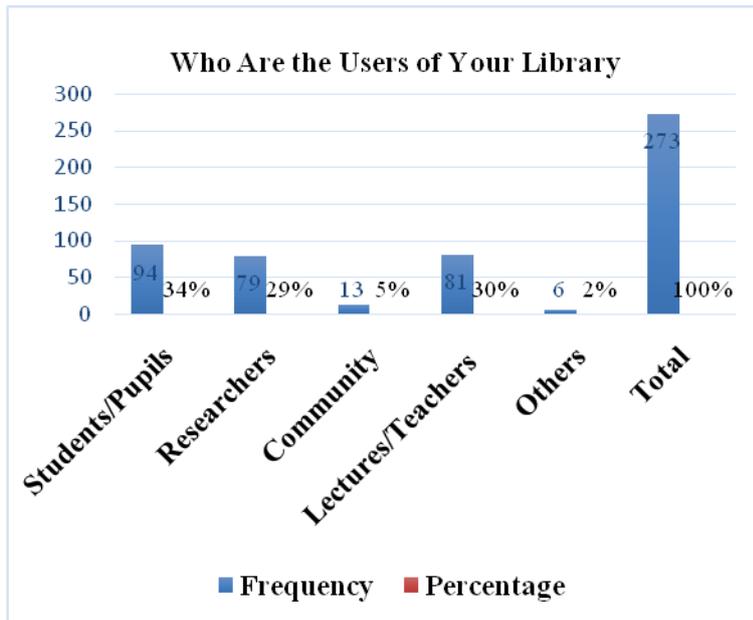


Fig 6 shows that majority, 66% of the participants attest that e-books were accessible in their libraries whereas 32%

of the participants indicate that e-books are not accessible in their libraries while 10% of the participants did not respond.

Figure 7: Who are the users of your library?



As observed from figure 7, majority 34% of the participants indicate that students/pupils were the users of the library whereas 30% of the participants

attest that lectures/ teachers were the users of the library while 29% indicated researchers and 5% specified community.

Figure 8: What Are the Sources of e- books in Your Library?

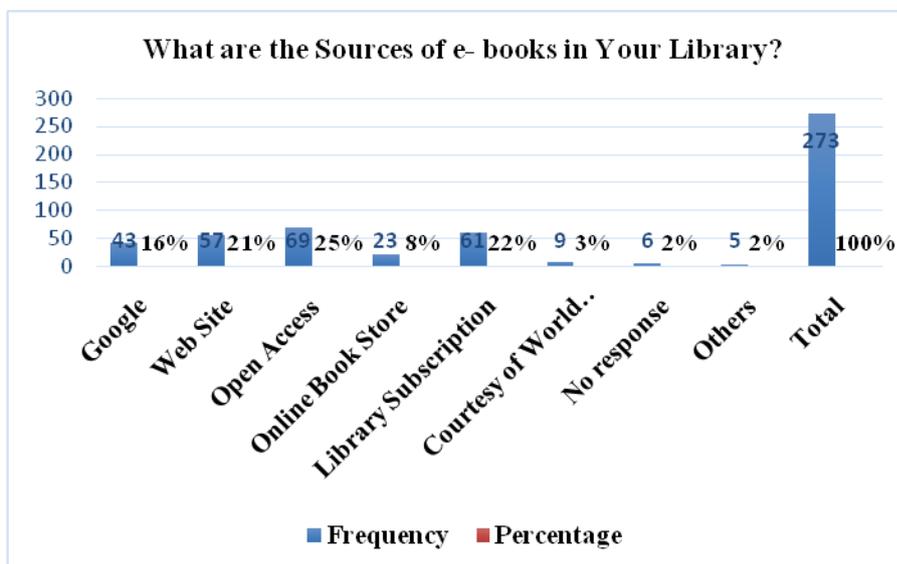
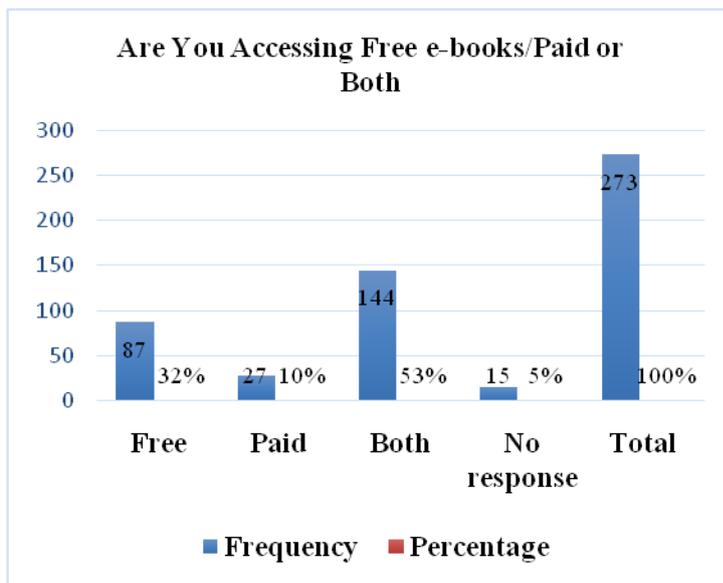


Figure 8 shows sources of e-books in the libraries, open access 25% whereas 23% of the participants affirmed online books store while 22% of the participants

indicated library subscription whereas 21% of the participants specified web site (Google 16%, courtesy of world readers 3%, while others 2% did not respond).

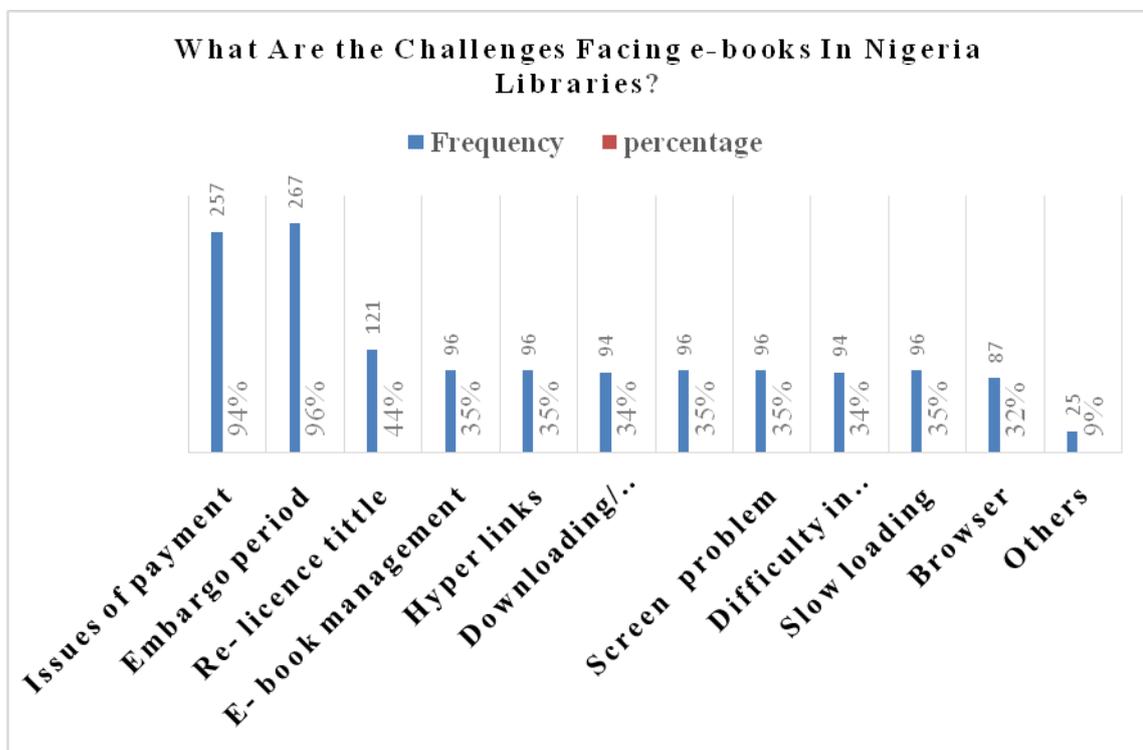
Figure 9: Are you accessing free e-books/paid or both



As observed from figure 9, majority, 53% of the participants specified that they were accessing both paid for and free e-books, whereas 32% of the participants indicated

free e-books while those who access paid for e-books only were 10% whereas 9% of the participants did not respond.

Figure 10: What Are the challenges facing e-books in Nigeria libraries?



N.B Participants are allowed to give more than one reasons

A numbers of challenges were identified, these include embargo period 96% whereas issues of payment per loan basis 94% while re-licence title 44% after a certain period of loans for example 18 or 62 loans, uncertainty of supply or withdrawal of publishers from supply of e-books with no notice, e-book supply override exception and limitations rights provided to libraries; while e-books management, hyperlink, lack of necessary equipment, screen problem, slow loading were 35% among other.

Conclusion and recommendations

From this survey results, we can draw a fair number of conclusions about the availability and accessibility of e-books in Nigeria libraries. E-books are yet to be available and accessible to some libraries in Nigeria. As noted above, majority of participants are from academic libraries. Also, they had access to e-books through open access, goggle, library subscription, web site and online book store etc. The vast majority of participants specified that they were accessing both paid for and free e-books.

Academic Libraries and others libraries in general should make e-books more available and accessible in the libraries so as to encourage more students in the use of e-book, create a separate e-

book collection, viewing facilities should be freely provided as well as organizing training and better use of e-books. From the finding of this survey, it is observed that e-book were getting acceptance among the users of libraries in Nigeria.

Based on the findings, the researchers recommend as follows, that

1. Nigeria Library Association, Library and Information Science Professionals and Stakeholders should continue to support national library associations to sensitize the public and the community at large about the relevance and importance of using e-books.
2. Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria and Nigeria Library Association should organise seminar with specific focus on e-book skills, capabilities and knowledge for librarians to support e-learning techniques among the users thus ensuring an educated crop of professionals with the confidence in e-books and related services to the users.
3. Library Stakeholders should lobby government and publishers to highlight the importance of access to affordable e-books in the libraries and solving the problem of embargo among others.

4. Library Stakeholders should continue to work with national associations and libraries to lobby governments to improve universal access to and use of computers and ICT infrastructure in public libraries and school libraries to enable client access to e-books.

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