

The Use of Internet by Academic Scientists in Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola.

by
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Abstract

The internet is an important tool for communication and retrieval of information. This study examined the use of internet in communication and retrieval of information by scientists in Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola. The survey method was used for the study. A total of 95 scientists in the school of pure and applied sciences (SPASS) constituted the population of the study. Result of the study shows that majority (60.45%) of the scientists use the internet occasionally to access information. They do not take advantage of the vast and rich knowledge preserved and communicated through e-books, e-thesis, and digital archives. Finally, majority of the scientists (60.49%) use the internet to get support or sponsorship for studies rather than for research. Some of the recommendations of the study include: The necessary requirement that universities should have good Information Technology (IT) infrastructure such as the internet in order to create easy information access and retrieval as well as to disseminate research findings for wider use; To overcome erratic retrieval problems and for fast access of wide and current range of resources so as to achieve maximum user satisfaction with economy of time, use of e-books, e-thesis and digital archives becomes the best option; The scientists also need to enhance their skills of internet surfing by way of regular training on the use and advantages of the internet.

Introduction

The use of technology to inform and make teaching, learning and research conducive is almost limitless. With technology playing an ever-more significant role in people's homes, lives and working places, the world is being shaped into a global village. Hence the world is in the midst of a communication and information revolution, complemented by an explosive growth in knowledge. The emergence of internet has made communication easier and less costly. Internet has made it possible for people to discuss and share information at the same time regardless of time, space and distance constraints. Professionals now disseminate worthy information electronically. Common data services and office automations are essential aspect of the university system. Hence the university must assure availability of all anticipated ICT services/systems at any work place in the University. The University is thus expected to provide common network services to cover the complete institution's network infrastructure, comprising LAN infrastructures and connections between geographically dispersed sites and connections to the internet backbone. It should also provide user-level data communication services such as email, access to internet, and internet/intranet services.

Much of the activities of the scientists are in the area of communication. A scientist is always eager to communicate his research finding, what he is doing, how he is doing and even his future researches. Counted among these communications are those among colleagues pursuing common research objectives, between experimental and theoretical scientists, between those in the basic and those in applied science. OSTI (2006) noted that these

communications may be formal and informal. The internet therefore gives greater flexibility in information and communication networking. It encourages a greater degree of connectivity and compatibility of data exchange. Ehikhamenor (2003) in his study observed that although the internet culture is creating a new scientific network, the scientists are still heavily dependent on printed information resources in libraries than the internet.

Objectives of the study

The study seeks to:-

1. identify how internet is facilitating information use among scientists in MAUTECH, Yola.
2. find out the reasons of internet use by the scientists in MAUTECH, Yola.
3. ascertain the level of internet use experience by the scientists in MAUTECH, Yola.
4. determine the amount of time spent on the internet by the scientists in MAUTECH, Yola.
5. determine the frequency of internet use by the scientists in MAUTECH, Yola.

Significance of the study

The study is significant because it will reveal the level of internet use among the scientists in MAUTECH, Yola. Its findings will lead to the improvement of teaching, research, learning and information network by scientists in the university under study. The findings of this study will benefit the scientists under study and the University community in general. This will be achieved through enhanced internet access and use by the scientists as a consequence of this study.

Scope of the study

The scope of the study is limited to scientists in the school of pure and applied sciences (SPASS) of the university. Academic scientists in the context of this study, is limited to only Lecturers in the departments under study.

Methodology

The survey method was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprises of all the academic scientists in eight (8) departments of SPASS in MAUTECH, Yola. Because of its small number, the whole population of the scientists in the school (95) was used for the study. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into 2 parts. Part one covers the biodata of the respondents, while part two covers the main variables of the study. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency counts and percentages were used for analyzing and discussing the findings of the study.

Review of literature

The internet is a worldwide network of computer networks that facilitate access to information. This is the reason why the internet is described as "information superhighway" to emphasize the widely held view that this global network will inevitably transform the way we create, manipulate, store, retrieve and utilize information, Shafack (2002). In recent times, internet has become the single most powerful source of information that ever existed. According to Bolarinwa (2001), the internet which is the major facilitator of information society has become the greatest wonder of the 20th century. The computer and internet revolution are indicators of the emergence of higher mental consciousness in society. Ojedokun, (2000), Mundi and Sultan, (2001) and Ajidahun (2004) stated the factors affecting the use of the Internet in Nigeria. These problems include

epileptic or erratic power supply, poor telecommunications, manpower problem, information that does not suit local needs, cost of computers, and high charges by Internet operators. Odunewu (2004) added that most of the users lack formal training.

Among the greatest benefits of internet is the inexpensive way to communicate with other internet users worldwide. More so, internet is used to obtain important resources for teaching and learning materials. In addition, books and journals that have hitherto been impossible to track current copies are now available electronically and instantaneously as they are published. The internet could be used as a teaching tool especially when the lecturer maintains a web page. This practice is becoming more with the availability of user-friendly web page publishing software. In related dimension, Oloruntoba and Bolarinwa (2001) reveal that, one cannot be emphatic about the state of information technology (including internet) in Nigeria. Whereas it is possible to ascertain the exact state of utilization of the internet in the developed nations as exemplified in the works of Bane and Miheleim (1995); Abel, Liebscher and Danman (1996); Bar-llan and Peritz (1997); Tomney and Burton (1998); Voorbji (1999); Dannis and Espionozo (2001); among others.

Findings and discussion

Copies of the questionnaires distributed to the sample respondents, 81 (85.26%) were duly completed and returned. Hence analysis and discussions were based on this very high figure of response rate.

Use of Internet Resources and Services

To determine the use of internet by the respondents, the scientists were requested to indicate those internet resources and services they use. Their responses were computed and presented below.

Table 1: Use of internet resources and services by Academic Scientists in MAUTECH, Yola

Internet resources	Responses			
	YES		NO	
	F	%	F	%
E-journals	69	85.18	12	14.81
E-books	11	13.58	70	86.41
e-mail	81	100	0	0
Online database	50	61.72	31	38.27
Digital archives	4	4.93	77	95.06
E-theses	15	18.51	66	81.48

Table 1 indicates that all the respondent 81 (100%) use the internet for e-mail purposes. This is not surprising because e-mail as a means of communication has become the order of the day. Majority of the respondents 69(85.18%) have also indicated that they use the internet for accessing e-journals, while 50 (61.72%) use the internet for online data base access. Furthermore 70 (86.41%) of the respondents indicated that they do not use the internet for the purpose of accessing e-books, and 66 (81.48%) of them also do not use the internet to get access to e-theses. Majority of them 77(95.06%) do not use the internet for accessing digital archives. From this analysis, it can be deduced that the scientists in MAUTECH, Yola do not explore the vast knowledge preserved in e-books, e-theses and digital archives.

Reasons for Internet Use

To ascertain the reasons for internet use by the scientists in MAUTECH, Yola the respondents were asked to indicate their reasons for using the network. This is because internet plays significant role in information sharing especially among scientists. Their responses were computed and presented below.

Table 2 shows that 81 (100%) and 75 (92.59%) of the academic scientists in the university under study use the internet for communication and support of study purposes respectively. While 50 (61.72%) and 46 (56.79%) of the scientists indicate their reasons for using the internet to be for professional research activities and recreation as well. However, majority of them do not use the internet for personal research, this is indicated by 49 respondents (60.49%).

Table 2: Reasons for internet use by Academic Scientists in MAUTECH, Yola.

Purpose	Responses			
	Yes		No	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Communication	81	100	0	0
Recreation	46	56.79	35	43.20
Professional research activities	50	61.72	31	38.27
Support of study	75	92.59	6	7.40
Personal research	32	39.50	49	60.49

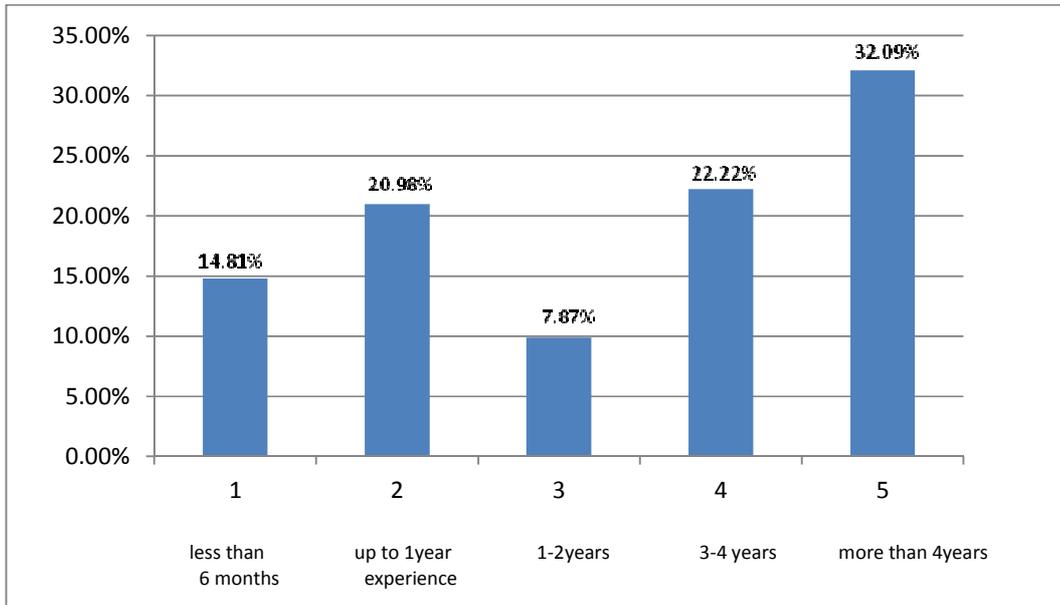


Figure 1. Experience of Internet use by *Academic Scientists in MAUTECH, Yola*

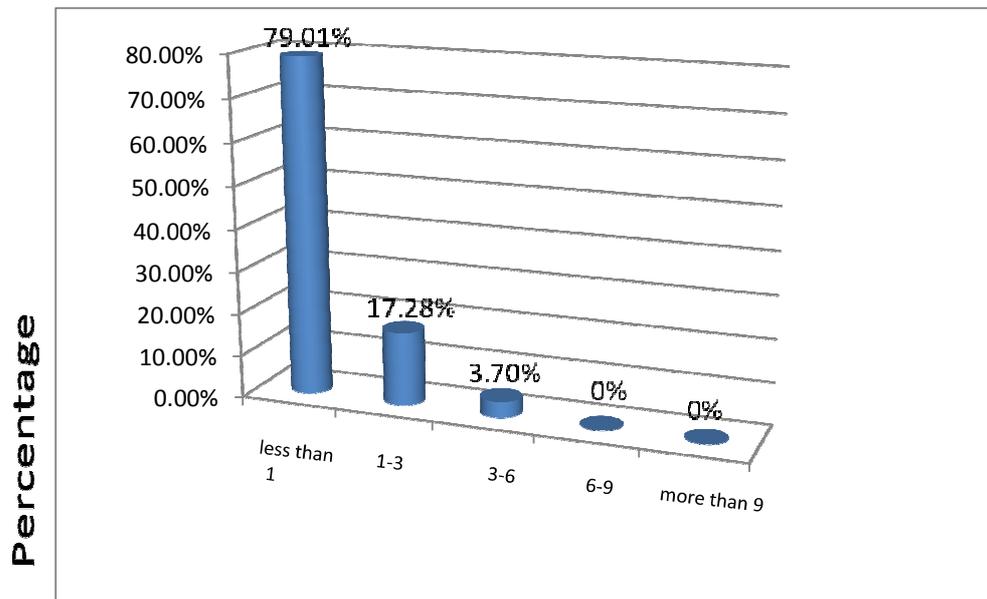


Figure 2: Time spent on internet by *Academic Scientists in MAUTECH, Yola*

Table 3: Frequency of internet use by Academic Scientists in MAUTECH, Yola

Frequency	Response	Percentage (%)	C.F. (%)
Daily	7	8.64	8.64
Monthly	25	30.86	39.5
Occasionally	30	37.03	76.53
When the need arises	19	23.45	100

Teaching, learning and research nowadays cannot be satisfactorily achieved without the use of internet. Hence the level of user experience becomes a factor to be examined. From table 3 and figure 2 above, it clearly indicates that only 26 respondents (32.09 %) have more than 4 years experience of internet use, while 12 of the respondents (14.81 %) have less than 6 months of experience. Furthermore, 18 (22.22 %) of the respondents have experience of 2-4 years and 17 (20.98 %) have maximum of 1 year experience. Whereas 8 (9.87 %) have the experience of 1-2 years.

Although, the researcher observed the availability of adequate internet facilities in the university under study, however, from the above analysis it can be noted that in this era of globalization otherwise called computer age, majority of the academic scientists in MAUTECH, Yola have maximum of 4 years internet experience.

From figure 3 it can be deduced that majority of the respondents 64 (79.01%) spent less than 1 hour whenever they are on the internet. 14 (17.28%) of the respondents spent 1-5 hours on the internet at a go and 3 (3.70%) of the respondents spent 3-6 hours. None of the scientists under study spent more than 6 hours on the internet at a go. By this finding, it can be postulated that the scientists being studied spent most of their time on non internet related activities.

Table 3 indicate that majority of the scientists 30 (37.03%) occasionally use the internet. This is closely followed by those who use the internet at least every month, 25 respondents (30.86%). However, significant number of the respondents, 19 (23.45%) confirmed that they only use the internet when the need arises. In contrast, very few of the respondents, 7 (8.64%) use the internet on daily basis. It is pertinent to note here that those that use the internet occasionally and when the need arises

constitute the majority of the scientists in MAUTECH, Yola, this is represented by 49 respondents (60.48%). This finding is unhealthy because internet as a crucial tool for education and research is not frequently being used by the scientists in the university under study.

Major Findings of the Study

From the forgoing analysis, examination and interpretation of the data collected, the following major findings are made by the researcher:

1. Majority of the scientists under study, 55(67.91%) have less than 4years internet experience.
2. Majority of the scientists under study, 49(60.48%) use the internet occasionally and as the need may arise. This means that browsing the internet to access information does not form part of their academic activities.
- 3 Academic scientists in MAUTECH, Yola do not take advantage of the vast and rich knowledge preserved and communicated through e-books, e-thesis and digital archives.
- 4 Majority of the scientists studied, 49(60.49%) do not use the internet for personal research, they only use the internet to get support for study, this is represented by 75 respondents (92.59%).
- 5 Most of the scientists under study spend their time on non internet related activities.

Conclusion

In conclusion therefore, the scientists in MAUTECH, Yola need to realize the inevitable fact that e-resources and services remain the best sources of current information. Hence, for positive rating, they have to inculcate the habit of using more of the e-resources and services accessed through the internet than otherwise.

Recommendations

1. With the growing impact of the internet, there has been a global revolution. The emergence of the internet has changed the role of libraries radically and has brought many challenges not only for libraries but also for users' community and library professionals, Maharana (2010). Therefore, for our libraries to function effectively and efficiently, and for library professionals to serve the user community with satisfaction; in depth knowledge of the information seeking behavior of the users becomes necessary.
 2. The study attests that (67.91%) if the respondents have maximum of 4years internet experience. This connote that majority of them have less experience in surfing the internet. It is of necessary requirement today that universities should have good Information Technology (IT) infrastructure such as the internet in order to create easy information access and retrieval as well as to disseminate research findings for wider use.
 3. The finding of this study shows that majority of the scientists have less experience in making optimum use of the available e-researches and services. It can therefore be suggested here that the university authority should encourage the use of internet by the scientists thus creating awareness of the undeniable importance of using the internet for solving information apathy.
 4. To overcome erratic retrieval problems and for fast access of wide and current range of
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5. It can also be suggested that the scientists in the university under study should be intimated with today's wide array of technology to meet their information demand.
 6. They also need to enhance their skills of internet surfing by way of regular training on the use and advantages of the internet. This will simplify and improve access and retrieval of information by the scientists.
 7. Majority of the respondents 92.59% as revealed by this study only use the internet resources for support of study. While only 39.50% use it for personal research. It can be suggested that the scientists need to expand the horizon of their internet surfing so as to get access to current findings, issues, trends and arguments on researches they conduct. This will give the scientists the opportunity to be current in their specialized areas of research and as such establish a strong information network and sharing with other scientists globally.
 8. Internet services should be made free to the scientists under study in order to encourage the use and ease of access of the facilities.

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