

Assessment of Virtual Library Resources at the National Teachers Institute Kaduna

By

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Abstract

This study assessed the virtual library of distance learning education programme of the National Teachers Institute Kaduna. Two research objectives were formulated and a survey research design was used. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 390 respondents from a population of 10666 students and 187 respondents from a population of 346 academic staff. Structured questionnaires were used to collect data from respondents. 309 copies of questionnaire were properly completed and subjected to statistical analysis. The findings of the study revealed among others that Journal storage and National Library Database were the only type of resources that are available to the Academic Staff and Students of NTI. The Major problems encountered by the Academic Staff and Students were inadequate access to the resources and insufficient computer literacy skills. Based on the findings it was concluded that, the present situation of the virtual library cannot meet the information need of Academic Staff and Students of NTI. In view of the findings, the recommendations made were that Management should acquire and install the adequate information communication facilities that will serve the need of both library and users in its acquisition, organization, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. It is recommended to Library and Management to have good maintenance culture and also acquire broadband access with reputable Internet Service Provider to facilitate easy access.

Introduction

In the wake of information and knowledge explosion many people aspire to acquire education at all levels but could not afford education through the formal route because of the limited space in the traditional institution of higher learning, those who joined workforce without completing their studies due to family commitments are unable to combine their work with studies and very few of them who have strong desire for higher studies could not do so. The tradition of childhood, early marriage and religious belief in the country deprives the majority of female population from higher education. Besides, physical disabilities, remoteness of localities, exorbitant tuition fees in most privately owned Institutions these are some of the major issues responsible for millions of Nigerians being deprived of higher education despite their interest and eligibilities this facts brought Distance Learning Education into focus.

Distance learning is a formalized learning received while the student is on a location outside the Institution of learning. Both the teacher and student are expected to have minimal physical contact, but much reliance on electronic communication and independent studying (Omoyemi, 2008). In distance learning, the learner chooses the place of study, time and pace of learning which could be thousand miles away. One of the Institutes that run Distance Learning Education Programme is the National Teachers Institute Kaduna.

The National Teachers Institute is an Institution for the training and re-training of teachers through Distance learning Education Programme. The institute runs Nigerian Certificate in Education

(NCE), Post Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) and Degree Programme. Due to the nature of the Institute Programme in which the students are far from their study centers a need for remote access to information becomes a necessity, this brought Virtual Library into existence at the Institute.

Virtual Library is a library in which the holdings are found in electronic format with remote access to information via the Internet. Virtual library facilitates online access to information resources such as databases, electronic journals, alerting services, electronic reference tools, and quality-vetted e-resources. It makes access to digital resources independent of time and distance; it is flexible and personalized to the individual thereby transforming the use of library materials

Statement of the problem

Virtual system provides collaborative learning environments by linking students with the instructors and co-learners in other geographical locations to journal, publications, text materials, reference materials and many others.

However, in spite of the tremendous benefits of virtual library to distance learners it is observed that some of the students do not access it to compliment the course materials in their field of study. One would expect that with the availability of virtual library non access to complete course material should not be an issue of serious concern. According to Oguntimehin (2006) poor utilization of resources leads to poor study skills, examination malpractice, poor performance and increase rate of drop out. It is against this backdrop that the researcher intends to

find out the availability and accessibility of virtual library resources in the distance learning education programme of the National Teachers Institute Kaduna.

Objectives

The major objective of the study is to examine the availability and accessibility of the Virtual Library Resources at the National Teachers Institute Kaduna. While the specific objective are:

1. To find out the types of library resources available and being aware of by staff and students of NTI Kaduna.
2. To discover how accessible one the available vital library Resource to staff and students of NTI Kaduna.

Literature Review

Availability of information sources means ensuring their presence in libraries for immediate use (Aguolu and Aguolu 2002). Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) argue that availability should be viewed from both national and instructional levels. They attribute the lack of availability of information sources to the steady proliferation of universities: federal, state, and private, along with increases in students and faculty, and the diversification of courses and academic and research programmes, without adequate information sources to meet the actual and information needs. They identify obstacles to the development of adequate information sources. Dike (1992) conducted research on the scarcity of books in Nigeria and the threat to academic excellence. She established that non-availability of information sources has led faculty and students not to use library services. Buckland (1975) analyzes frustrations felt by users who fail to find the information sources they want in the library.

A study by Marama and Ogunrombi (1996) confirms high unavailability of library and information science (LIS) collections in most Nigerian university libraries, which had a negative effect on the use of information sources in the libraries studied. The librarians cannot conduct quality research and get published, and library students cannot even use library services. The authors recommended that at least 5 percent of the book budget be set aside for LIS information sources. The study, though limited to LIS, can be generalized to other subject areas. Unomah (1987) conducted a study at the former Bendel State University to determine the unavailability rate in the library and to find out its causes. The survey revealed an unavailability rate of 34 percent. One effect on the use of library service was that 300 users (71.4%) gave up and went away

frustrated. On acquisition performance, the survey showed that the library acquired only a little more than half the items requested. A similar study by Okiy (2000) showed an unavailability rate of only 7.5%. Iyoro (2004) found that availability of serials at the University of Ibadan was 94 percent, with 242 of 256 respondents agreeing that serial publications are available and readily accessible.

Ajayi and Akinniyi (2004) found frustration among information seekers due to the non-availability of sources. Aina (1985) analyzed the availability of periodical titles used in Nigerian libraries, finding that only 67 (11.5%) of the 578 periodical titles studied were not available in any of the major libraries, and confirming a high availability rate. Oyediran-Tidings (2004) studied information needs of library users at the Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, and observed low use of the library by the students, which was "attributed to the expressed unavailability of desired information resources." The paper suggests seeking user input for the acquisition process and policy.

McCray and Gallagher (2001) give an overview of issues concerning Usability and Accessibility of digital libraries. The system must be accessible to the vast majority of users regardless of disability, language or cultural differences. The information should be easy to find using keyword searching. The interface should be intuitive with the keyword search easy to find as well as the ability to browse topics. Information should be optimised so that the retrieval of information is quick. Good indexing is vital so that the search terms can be well matched in results and results found quickly. Further research areas exists within the usability area for accessing digital library collections on small screen hand held devices, in measuring the users experience when interacting with a digital library which is linked to research into emotive design, and in cross-cultural usability. Accessibility of information sources is an important recurring theme in the literature. According to Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), resources may be available in the library and even identified bibliographically as relevant to one's subject of interest, but the user may not be able to have access on them. One may identify citations in indexes, but may not have access to the sources containing the relevant articles. The more accessible information sources are, the more likely they are to be used. Readers tend to use information sources that require the least effort to access. Osundina (1994) studies the relationship between accessibility and library use by undergraduates in Nigeria and notes that the problem of Nigerian students is not the question of wanting to

use the college library, but whether or not the university library can provide for their needs, and whether there is access to what is provided.

Olowu (2004) identifies natural and artificial barriers to free access to information. The library's poor reputation was attributed to lack of accessibility of information sources. Iyoro (2004) examines the impact of serial publications in the promotion of educational excellence among information professionals receiving further training at the University of Ibadan. The study looks at the perception of how serial accessibility has contributed to students' learning process. Serials were found to play a significant role in the acquisition of knowledge, because the serial collection was easily and conveniently accessible.

In a similar study by Oyediran-Tidings (2004) at Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, low use of the library by students was observed. This was attributed to expressed accessibility problems. Neelamegham (1981) has identified accessibility as one of the prerequisites of information use while Kuhlthau

(1991) argues that the action of information seeking depends on the needs, the perceived accessibility, sources, and information seeking habits. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) reveal that efforts are being made worldwide to promote remote access to information. They lament the attendant features of underdevelopment such as power failure, machine breakdowns, and lack of spare parts and technicians, which intermittently stall the performance of the modern gadgets of information storage and transfer in developing countries.

Methodology

A research method was adopted for this study. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select 390 respondents from a population of 10666 students and 187 respondents from a population of 346 academic staff. Questionnaire was the instrument used for collecting data 550 respondents in the four zones of Kaduna State were sampled. 309 were completed and returned to the researcher and all the returned questionnaires were found useful for the study.

Findings and discussion

Table 1: Virtual Library Resources Available and Being Aware of by the Academic Staff and Students of the National Teachers Institute, Kaduna

Virtual Library Resources	Academic Staff		Students	
	F	%	F	%
Journal Storage	58	38.6	56	35.2
NUC Database	35	23.3	41	25.7
National Library Database	51	34	45	28.3
Scottish Library Database	22	14.6	21	13.2
Canadian Library Database	23	15.3	27	16.9

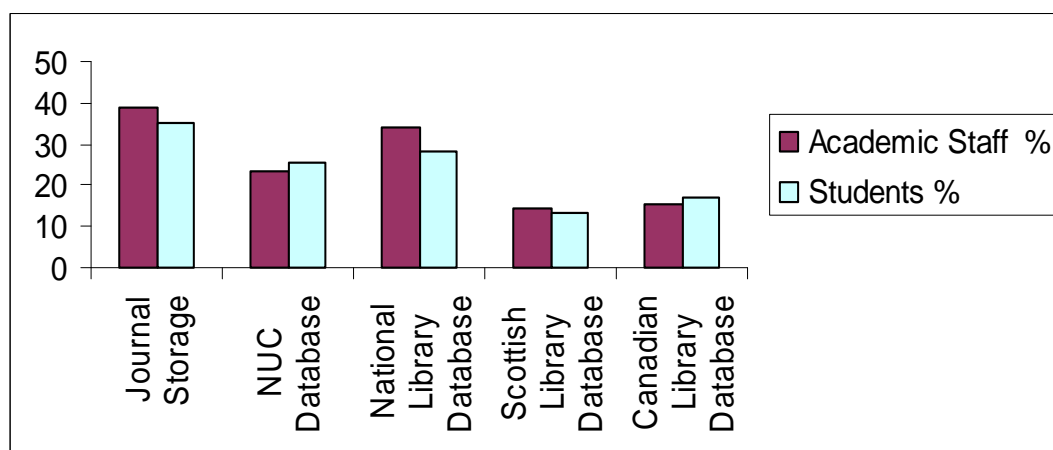


Fig. 1 Virtual Library Resources available and being aware of by the Academic Staff and Students of the National Teachers Institute, Kaduna

Table 1 and figure 1 showed that, Jstor (Journal Storage) (38.6%) and National Library Data base of (34.0%) were the major types of virtual library resources available and being aware of by the Academic Staff also Jstor (Journal Storage) (35.2%) and National Library Data base of (28.3.0%) were the types of virtual library resources available and being aware of by the Students of NTI, Kaduna. Whereas Scottish Library Database (14.6%) and Canadian Library Database (15.3%) were other types of virtual library resources available and being aware of by Academic staff. Scottish Library Database (13.2%) and Canadian Library Database (16.9%) were other types of virtual library resources available and being aware of by the student of the National Teachers Institute Kaduna.

A further examination of table 1 and fig. 1 showed that out of the five (5) Virtual Library Resources

available, only two have more than 30% frequency of availability. This finding is in agreement with that of Ajayi and Akinniyi (2004) who found frustration among information seekers due to the non-availability of sources. Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) argue that availability should be viewed from both national and instructional levels. They attribute the lack of availability of information sources to the steady proliferation of universities: federal, state, and private, along with increases in students and faculty, and the diversification of courses and academic and research programmes, without adequate information sources to meet the actual and information needs. They identify obstacles to the development of adequate information sources. Dike (1992) conducted research on the scarcity of E-books in Nigeria and the threat to academic excellence. She was able to establish that non-availability of information sources has led faculty and students not using library services.

Table 2 Accessibility of Virtual Library Resources by the Academic Staff and Students of NTI, Kaduna

Virtual Library Resources	Accessibility of Virtual Library Resources											
	Academic Staff						Students					
	EA	%	A	%	NA	%	EA	%	A	%	NA	%
Journal Storage	36	20	41	27.3	73	48.6	22	13.8	31	19.4	106	66.6
NUC Database	28	18.6	47	31.3	75	50	18	11.3	31	19.4	110	69.1
National Library Database	31	20.6	49	32.6	70	46.6	19	11.9	35	22	105	66
Scottish Library Database	16	10.6	16	10.6	118	78.6	10	6.2	17	10.6	132	83
Canadian Library Database	20	13.3	38	25.3	92	61.3	12	7.5	27	16.9	120	75.4

KEY: EA-Easily Accessible A-Accessible NA-Not Accessible

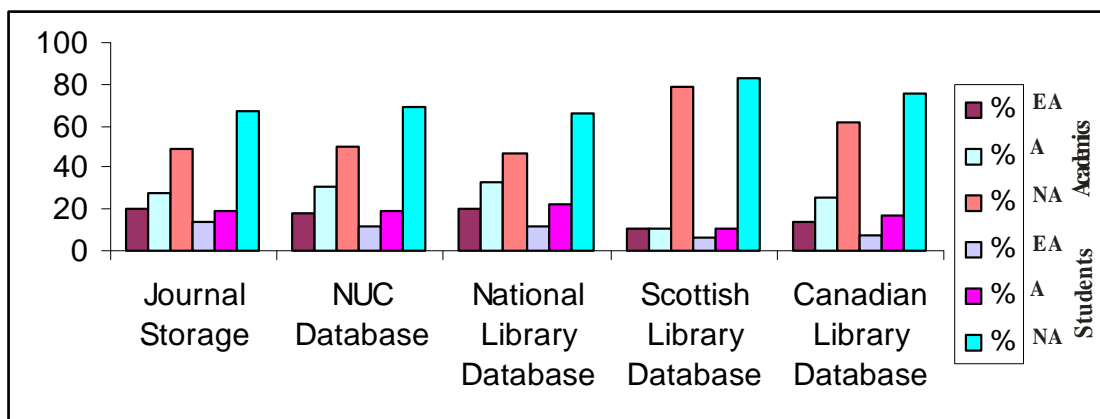


Table 2 and Fig.2 showed the response of the respondents on the Extent of Accessibility of Virtual Library Resources by the Academic Staff and Students of NTI, Kaduna. It was discovered that Jstor (24.0%) and National Library Database (20.0%) were the virtual library resources found to be easily accessible to the Academic Staff also Jstor (13.8%) and National Library Database (11.9%) were the virtual library resources found to be easily accessible to the Students of the National Teachers Institute Kaduna. Whereas, Scottish Library Database (78.6%) and Canadian Library Database (61.3%), were the types of virtual library resources not easily accessible to the Academic Staff in the same vain Scottish Library Database (83.0%) and Canadian Library Database (75.4.2%) were the types of virtual library resources not easily accessible to the Students. This finding is supported by McCray and Gallagher (2001) who gave an overview of issues concerning Usability

and Accessibility of digital libraries. The system must be accessible to the vast majority of users regardless of disability, language or cultural differences. The information should be easy to find using keyword searching. The interface should be intuitive with the keyword search easy to find as well as the ability to browse topics. Information should be optimised so that the retrieval of information is quick. Good indexing is vital so that the search terms can be well matched in results and results found quickly. According to Aguolu and Aguolu (2002), resources may be available in the library and even identified bibliographically as relevant to one's subject of interest, but the user may not be able to have access on them. One may identify citations in indexes, but may not have access to the sources containing the relevant articles. The more accessible information sources are, the more likely they are to be used. Readers tend to use information sources that require

the least effort to access. Osundina (1994) studies the relationship between accessibility and library use by undergraduates in Nigeria and notes that the problem of Nigerian students is not the question of wanting to use the college library, but whether or not the university library can provide for their needs, and whether there is access to what is provided.

Olowu (2004) identifies natural and artificial barriers to free access to information. The library's poor reputation was attributed to lack of accessibility of information sources. Iyoro (2004) was not in support of this finding. He examines the impact of serial publications in the promotion of educational excellence among information professionals receiving further training at the University of Ibadan. The study looked at the perception of how serial accessibility has contributed to students' learning process. Serials were found to play a significant role in the acquisition of knowledge, because the serial collections were easily and conveniently accessible. In a similar study by Oyediran-Tidings (2004) at Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, low use of the library by students was observed. This was attributed to expressed accessibility problems. Neelamegham (1981) identified accessibility as one of the prerequisites of information use while Kuhlthau (1991) argues that the action of information seeking depends on the needs, the perceived accessibility, sources, and information seeking habits.

Conclusion

Based on the findings it can be concluded that, the present situation of the virtual library cannot meet the information need of Academic Staff and Students of NTI. This is because out of five databases available only two are accessible to the users.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. NUC, Scottish and Canadian databases and others like science direct, emerald, and ebscohost should be made available and accessible to staff and students by the NTI management.
2. Promotional activities, training, and orientation should be intensified by the library to create more awareness and improved access.

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