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# RE-POSITIONING FACULTY LIBRARIES USING TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS: A PANACEA FOR INFORMATION SERVICE DELIVERY IN BENUE STATE ACADEMIC LIBRARIES DURING POST COVID-19 ERA

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## Abstract
*The wake of COVID-19 pandemic has thrown in a revolution of technological resources and its usefulness in dissemination of information services in Benue State Academic libraries. It became paramount to strategies an effective use of evolving technological resources. Post COVID-19 pandemic era requires emphatic sensitization and implementation of the government protocol to avoid reinfection of the community within the university environment which is usually populated. An observational factor of the non-pharmaceutical preventive measures against COVID-19 (which is regarded as the new normal within the faculty libraries requires) requires stringent enforcement by a supervisory team due to the high rate of deviance. This paper seeks to address the strategies on the re-positioning of faculty libraries to effectively use trending technologies to disseminate information needs of the teeming students in their various departmental academic environments. There are enlisted measures on the possibility to divert pressures from the Main Library to the faculty libraries with the objectives of providing intellectual library services in a controlled population to avert breaching laid down government protocols within the university community. The technological nexus in this perspective were: KOHA, RemoteXs, RFID and Groupware Technology etc. The challenges identified were such as; infrastructural inadequacies, funding, adaptability of the new normal and enforcement of the preventive protocols. The study however recommends the following; Inaugurate COVID-19 Protocol Committee, Budgeting and financing appropriately, Up-skilling and Retooling, Activation of Institutional Repositories and Positivism in Attitudinal change to use of technology for effective information service deliveries in faculty libraries.*

**Keywords***:* Faculty Libraries, Post Covid-19, Technological Innovation, Information Service Delivery

## Introduction

The era of 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) depicts the use of technologies as innovative sustainable tools to information literacy as well as effective and efficient aspect of intellectual information service delivery in academic libraries through the use of remote technologies at faculty libraries. The purpose of this paper dwells on introduction and use of technology-based resources for remote library service delivery in the midst of post COVID-19 pandemic. the ill of the era is the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic which affect all spheres of life due to lack of immediate vaccines to curtail the spread. While the cautious preventive measures are the non-pharmaceutical approaches for curtailing its spread. Preventive measures as; maintaining distance of one to 2 meters, which is equivalent to 3 feet, regular washing of hands with soap and running water, wearing of face mask/shield, and avoiding crowded places, were among others adopted to curtail the spread of COVID-19. The imminent COVID-19 pandemic has infused recession and affected our economy in general. As a result, there is need to enforce government non-pharmaceutical preventive protocols in academic environments to curtail its community spread. Therefore, Director, National Centre for Disease Control (2020), at a press conference of the Presidential Taskforce on COVID-19, advanced that citizens agitated for ease down COVID - 19 protocols on the educational sector and approved the reopening of schools beginning with the exit class. Based on this, Nongo (2020) avers the need to enlighten students on healthy waste disposal habits on campuses in Nigerian tertiary institutions by medical librarians at the wake of COVID-19, which proffered strategies to curtail community infection. The idea of dislodging students' entry from the main university library building to the faculty libraries was birthed from Government regulations on avoiding crowds. Whereas, using the faculty libraries would control too many students influx into the libraries. Students' data and details are easily traceable in case of any community infection because of the statistical data complied during library usage at faculty and departmental libraries. While inadvertently, main university libraries harbour all students from different disciplines to access library information resources. Tracking of students in case of any community infection if arisen is obviously difficult and would spell doom to the entire university system. The researchers at this juncture saw the need to address the gap in literature for projecting contemporary technologies for remote services and re-positioning faculty libraries to serve students information needs while dis-congesting the main university library building from staff and student vulnerability of COVID-19 infection.

## Review of Related Literature

Faculty Libraries are designed to provide information resources services to various faculty and departmental libraries remotely. These types of libraries are found in academic environment and they faculty libraries serves strictly faculty members and students by providing access to information which promotes a culture of academic excellence. They also offer instructions that fosters scholarship, integrity and independent intellectual growth and the sophisticated information skills necessary for life-long learning. Bolger and Smith (2006) study affirm the need to inculcate librarians services in institution of learning even as their likely hold is "the higher the tier, the better overall quality of their duties" in review processes of research in the faculties. Hosburgh (2011) asserted that faculty librarians perform professional responsibilities serving the purpose of disseminating information related to the specific disciplines found in both departments and faculties. He emphasized that one

of the fundamental services of librarians in the faculties is usually based on the teaching and research models as their core services.

Therefore, in a bid to re-positioning faculty libraries to disseminate information services remotely to contain with the era of the pandemic innovative technological approach should be exponentially utilized especially in the 21st century. The 21st century has witnessed a dreaded disease hence an evolving 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) thrives. In the midst of it, schools and libraries were shut down in a bid to curtail the spread. Libraries are seen as highly risky environment for COVID-19 infection and transmission due to the population of students (Hopkins centre 2020). It is in view of the foregoing, the researcher deemed it necessary to conceptualize a technology acceptance model which has informed the need for librarians to use technology inclined resources to disseminate information resources and remain relevant in service delivery even when the shelves are gone or restricted to users due to the control measures to curtail the spread of the novel disease Corona virus COVID-19.

This study earmarked some obviously non exhaustive types of technology namely; OPAC, KOHA, Remotex, Ezpoxy and Groupware designed for remotely organized services to avert inaccessibility of the physical materials in academic libraries by way of collaborative team work to deliver services, all hands must be on deck to demystify relevance of the librarians even when the shelves are gone. According to Consoltech (2019) "C*ollaborative technology refers to tools and systems designed to better facilitate group work both in office and remote*". Ibenne & Okai (2020) aver that, collaborative technologies are facilities of inter-personal and inter-group projects and are anchored on a type of software called the groupware.

The researcher at this juncture saw the need to address the gap in the level of re-positioning faculty libraries to meet students' information needs while dis-congesting the main university library building from staff vulnerability of COVID-19 infection. In essence, a remotely systemic literature review services are enhanced as part of the functions of a faculty librarian in academic libraries due to the information literacy services been a requisite mode of communication and conversation between the users and librarians in each respective faculty libraries. (Anthony 2010).

## Statement of the Problem

Nigerian academic libraries in perspective had encountered series of issues during COVID-19 lockdown by complying to government non-pharmaceutical directives, information delivery services were halted. The dwindling situation affected both economic and educational sectors. It became pertinent for practising librarians and educators to engage in training members through organized e-conference, e-workshop using virtual space to synergize and acquire skills on innovative technologies. A knowledge-based proficiency and up-skill towards enhancing their proactiveness and responsiveness to remotely knowledge information service delivery at the emergence of the mantra COVID-19.

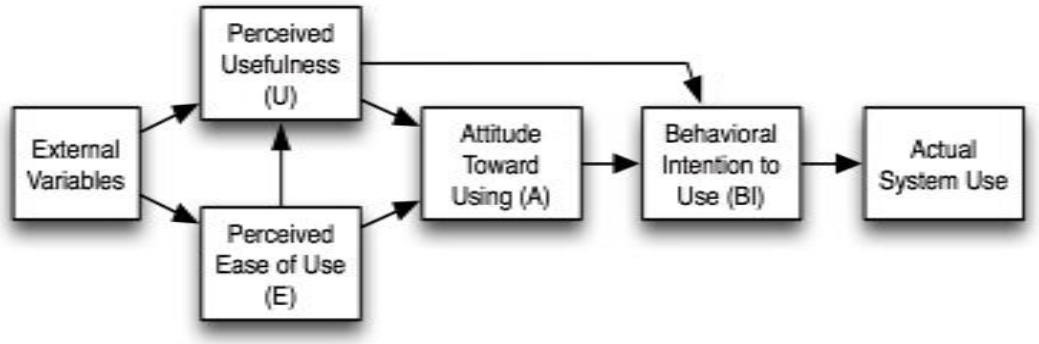
The uniqueness in diverse e-training and e-workshop carried out during the lockdown was enormous. It enabled familiarization, acquaint practicing librarians and educators to become abreast with latest developments of new normal library services in academic libraries besides the limitations orchestrated by technophobia among some practicing library ICT immigrants. However, this learning period was not achievable at a go but an unremitting development due to the level of librarian's inquisitiveness expressed by active participation inclination of innovative technology for sustainable effective library service delivery a midst government induced lockdown protocols.

**Conceptual Model: Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by *Vankatesh and Davis 2003***

This study adopted a Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) 2 & 3 which is regarded as the unified theory of acceptance and use of technology. It was formulated for "user acceptance of information technology toward a unified view" with four core determinants of intentions and usages with four moderators of key relationships viz: performance expectancy, effort expectancy social influence and facility conditions. The theory holds that the first three are the determinants of user behaviour, gender, age, experience and voluntarism. It is aimed to explain user intentions to use an information system and subsequent usage behaviour which provides impact assessment and helps to understand the drivers of acceptance in order to proactively design an intervention.

Studies by Adekunle, Omoba and Tella (2007) described attitudes of librarians in the developing countries like Nigeria as negative and not encouraging and those acts slowed down the progress of ICT in the libraries and this led to the development of TAM. However, the new normal has paved ways to avert rejection of ICT and rather embrace its use in its entirety as a necessary tool.

The University Management acquiring these technologies is not the issue but rather the skills and willingness to use it exponentially as a result of perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of such technologies is the major concern in this study.
Below is the Technology Acceptance Model diagram




**Remote Services in the Pandemic Era**

This remote information services are extremely the best for the era. It allows for content creation and display by Librarians in delivery of information services in academic libraries. The manual use of traditional ways and digital models samples for information delivery services in this era are stated below.

**Samples of Technologies for Remote Services**

Obviously, this list is not exhaustive of the remotely used technologies for effective library service delivery. However, will be discussed here;

i. **RFID Technology:** RFID simply means Radio Frequency Identification which uses sensors network technologies. It is a new technology for library transactions (check-in and check-out) devices. The era requires the use of technology to diver information services to users. It is pertinent to delve into increase possible ways of fast-tracking information services and user-friendly services. This particular technology adopts the fourth law of library sciences which is "Save the time of the user" (Ranganathan 1931).
ii. **KOHA:** It is a software traced to have been in practical use since 1999. It was funded by a group of libraries in rural New zealand. Adekunle, Olla and

Oshiname (2016) submitted that, KOHA is an open-source software (OSS), enjoying robust vendor, technical and other supports from community of users. They described it as user friendly, supports social medial applications, inter-operational with other databases. KOHA is the world's best open-source library automation software used in academic, public and special libraries around the world at the moment. Its modules fully covers, acquisition, serials, cataloging, reports, and tools for add-on module in the library.

iii. **RemoTex:** It is regarded as a single-window platform to access all subscribed e-resources anytime, anywhere and it is capable of accessing scattered e-resources of an institution, bringing them into one umbrella which entails all e-contents. This is a type of remotely technology which is usable and adaptable at the faculty level both for research and learning whereby students build their own knowledge base in spite of diverse relative base discipline (Bhoi, 2018).

iv. **Groupware:** Groupware or Collaborative ware is a term that defines a software which supports multiple users working on a related task in local and remote networks. It is an evolving concept that is more than just multi-user software which allows access to same data simultaneously (Magazine, 2019).

**Challenges**

Obviously, the innovative technological resources is not used without challenges in the following areas:

i. Non activation of the academic libraries within the scope of study to functional open educational resources (OER) in the state and orchestrated Institutional Repository (OER) requires information resources service deliveries.
ii. Acquisition of ICT Skills by staff of the faculty libraries is another major challenge as well as collaboration of millennial staff and ICT immigrants create friction and complexity in the work environment.
iii. Dilapidated Infrastructures as well as obsolesce of technological resources.
iv. Budgeting policies and release of funds accrued to the libraries is a major setback.

**Conclusion**

This study is aimed at re-positioning faculty libraries through remote technological resources, deliver information services to users. These innovations are not without challenges such as; non activation of OER, friction and complexity in the work places among the immigrants and millenials on ICT skills, Dilapidated infrastructures and delayed Budgeting policies. The perceived analysis of their use portrays surmountable forces because of the zeal and determination of the librarians in keeping to their philosophy of effective and efficient service delivery using the innovative remotely technology. The evolution of librarian's work has changed drastically and we rely largely on the digital evolution of technology as the new normal, at post COVID-19 is in contrast with the conventional work environment which is principally office-based.

**Way Forward**

In suggestions to the use of remote technologies for faculty libraries, the following areas are listed for effective scrutiny and implementation to logical success:

i. Re-opening check lists in the libraries should commence in earnest such as: Provision of running water Taps, Disinfectants, Hand gloves, Face Masks and Fumigation against reptiles invasion of the library infrastructures.

ii. Inaugurate COVID-19 Protocol Committees to evaluate plans with minimal target users' entrance and exit in the faculty libraries and allocating preventive measures schedules to proactive Library staff.
iii. Continuous feedback and impact assessments should be encouraged weekly.
iv. Librarians' positive attitudinal shifts from negativity to positivist using reliable technology for information service deliveries.
v. Activate the Institutional Repositories into massive functionality and uploading hard-copies of library holdings for effective access of information in diverse faculty and departmental libraries.
vi. Up-skilling of faculty Library staff and re-tooling of technological variables for the 21st century era of technology innovative services.
vii. Budgeting and financing of the libraries at this juncture is very necessary for enhanced services and sustainability of library services in the face of averting a relapse of the pandemic.

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