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ASSESSMENT OF DIGITAL ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study is a survey study carried on assessment of digital academic libraries in Plateau State, Nigeria. The objectives of the study were to assess usability of links, website functionality and users' satisfaction. Survey research design and systematic sampling technique was employed for the study. The target population for the study was 10, 973 registered library users and the sample of 549 was drawn from the 10, 973 as the study's sample size using 5% of the target population. Adetoro (1986) recommended that a minimum of 5% should be used for a population of 10,000 and above. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. Thus, 549 copies of questionnaire were distributed to undergraduate students in academic libraries in Plateau State and response rate recorded was 391 which were used for data analysis. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages. The findings revealed that: links were usable; digital libraries websites were functional; users were not satisfied with functionality and usability of digital libraries. Based on the findings the following recommendations were made: the university management should provide reliable network to support access to links without errors when loading so as to support teaching and learning process and the libraries and university management should provide means that would ensure the functionality of their library websites so as to enhance and harness students' skills. The study concluded that network must be stable to make links usable without errors when locating information so as to meet the information needs of the users.
Keywords: *Assessment, Digital, Library, Links and Website*

Introduction

Digital libraries basically store materials in electronic format and manipulate large collections of those materials effectively. A digital library is fundamentally a resource that reconstructs the intellectual substance and services of a traditional library in digital form. Digital libraries consist of digital contents (which are sometimes but not necessarily text-based), interconnections (which may be simple links or complex metadata or query-based relationships), and software (which may be simple pages in Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) or

complex database management systems). The digital library is not a single entity but requires technology to link the resources of many services that are transparent to the end users; Universal access to digital libraries and information services is a goal. Digital library collections are not limited to document surrogates, they extend to digital artifacts that cannot be represented or distributed in printed formats.

The digital library divisions in university libraries consist of electronic information resources, according to Bankole, Ajiboye, and Otunla (2015) electronic information resources consists of information resources provided in electronic formats such as internet, CDROM databases, e-books e-journals, Online database, Online Public Access Catalogues, and other computer-based electronic networks. Electronic information resources are now a major resource in every university library and it has significantly transformed information handling and management in academic environments and in university libraries in particular. Electronic resources can be searched, browsed, accessed, copied, downloaded fast and customized, linking feature facilitates within the documents as well as outside of the documents, many users can use electronic resources simultaneously, and it is possible to monitor the usage of electronic information resources to some extent (Bankole, Ajiboye, and Otunla, 2015).

Utilization is the level of an individual usage to access and retrieve information from digital libraries. The utilization of digital libraries in recent times has proved beyond reasonable doubt that digital library can perform better when facilities are adequately provided for the utilization of information resources by undergraduate students. This would promote, improve and enhance access to the content of the digital library. Users like students and other information seekers are the ones to benefits from the digital library using their searching skill. Student can access and download current information through internet, as well as search for the same information concurrently using different terminals, which is impossible through the traditional methods of rendering services in libraries. Hamade (2010) posited that students generally prefer to use digital libraries because it makes their work easier and give them information that they need speedily when the network is of standard. Furthermore, the researcher emphasized that ninety-six percent of students use digital libraries and are aware of their benefits but majority of them still like to use printed materials to complement the electronic resource. One of the benefits of digital libraries is speed and ease use of information which prompts most students to make use of it more than the print media and in some cases, they make use of it for assignment, exams and research work (project).

Website is a collection of web pages, links, images, videos, multimedia files

and etcetera held on a single server or multiple servers and accessible via internet. The web pages are written in HTML format, and each page has its own uniform resource locator (URL) and accessible via hypertext transfer protocol (HTTP). Website has offered users fast and easy access to the resources and services of a library in an organized way. It has now become a vital source to fulfill the information needs of users at their desktop (Harazeem, 2018). Academic library websites, particularly university library websites offer sophisticated digital resources, full-text databases, Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC), research tools, and useful links for research and educational purposes. Through library website users can submit short reference inquiries, suggestions for collection development, interlibrary loan (ILL) requests, reservation of particular materials, etc. The library website also offers general information about the library such as introduction, opening and closing hours, new arrival, library management pictures, printed materials, OPAC, or selected links available on the internet. Kehinde and Adeyinka (2012) observe that students prefer the ease of commercial search engines such as Google to accomplish their tasks.

Statement of the Problem

Preliminary observation shows that resources are to some extent at the student's disposal, but it seems the students find it difficult to maximize the utilization of these digital libraries. Could this be attributed to lack of searching skills such as harnessing, accessing and retrieving of electronic information resources or lack of functional website, links, network availability and barriers placed on access which retard information retrieval and utilization among undergraduate students in selected universities of Plateau State, Nigeria?. This situation may also be attributed to lack of computer literacy, lack of proper funding of the digital libraries under study or lack of proper development and maintenance of the library websites and this may undermine the relationship between digital libraries, utilization and searching skills among undergraduate students in selected Universities in Plateau State, Nigeria. It is against this background that the researcher carried out this study on the assessment of digital academic libraries in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to determine:

1. The level of linkage usability and students harnessing skills
2. The level of websites functionality and students harnessing skills
3. The level of users' satisfaction with the use of the library websites in selected

universities in Plateau State, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the level of linkage usability and students harnessing skills?
2. What is the level of websites functionality and students harnessing skills?
3. What is the level of users' satisfaction with the use of the library websites?

Review of Related Literature

Linkage usability encompasses the ability of user to do their intended tasks on the library website without any obstruction in terms of slow network availability to harness, access, retrieve and download electronic information resources from the digital libraries. Ibinnaiye (2012) asserts that usability evaluates how easily and effectively the user learns to accomplish tasks, and can be extended to include the contributions of documenting the learning process. Study conducted by Shieh and Liu (2010) on the usability evaluation study of the university library websites reveals that learnability and usability was measured in terms of understandability of steps required to complete tasks, time required to know how to begin searching, helpfulness of how to search instructions and memorability of the user interface.

Aba, Beetseh and Ogban *(2015) conducted a study on* the use of internet services by postgraduate students for research in Francis Idachaba library, university of agriculture Makurdi revealed that 37.78% had received internet training from external sources, the internet skills of 44.44% was rated average, only 22% used the internet daily, 87.41 % claimed that digital libraries had greatly enhanced their academic performance and 94 % were fully satisfied with the Internet facilities. They further disclosed that majority of the postgraduate students used internet facilities outside the university mainly for research and education activities, but encounter problems such as longtime to view or download web pages and insufficient computers, the use of internet had led to decreased in the use of traditional library facilities and they recommended that proper guidance of students in the use of e-resource was needed.

Omekwu (2014) conducted a study on internet search strategies employed by library and information science students of university of Nigeria which revealed correlational research design was used, systematic sampling technique was employed and questionnaire was the instrument used for the study. Out of 34.71mean of respondents, research indicates that the use of Internet to search for materials for writing term papers, projects and other assignments attracted 3.81

mean of respondents; use of Internet to send and receive messages attracted 2.9 mean of respondents; use of Internet to search for information on upcoming courses attracted 2.67 mean of respondents; use of Internet for communication purpose attracted 3.2 mean of respondents; use of Internet to keep up-to-date with news, music and sports attracted 3.22 mean of respondents and use of Internet to supplement lectures given in class attracted 3.07 mean of respondents. On other research question, the use of Boolean Operators to narrow down research topics, use of phrase searching and sending e-mails to researchers to send research materials attracted 2.18, 2.39, and 2.39 mean of respondents respectively, which is regarded as negative. Visit of search engines; sourcing information from the university library databases; and doing key word searching attracted 3.7, 2.59, and 2.59 mean of respondents respectively.

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population for the study was 10, 973 registered library users (undergraduate students) of University of Jos Library and Plateau State University Library. Systematic sampling technique was used for the study. The sample of 549 was drawn from the 10, 973 as the study's sample size using 5% of the target population. Adetoro (1986) recommended that a minimum of 5% should be used for a population of 10, 000 and above. The researcher used self-designed questionnaire as the instrument for collecting data. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

A total of 549 copies of questionnaire were administered to respondents in the two University Libraries in Plateau State, Nigeria. Out of which 391 were completed, returned and found usable.

Table 1: The Level of Linkage Usability and Students Harnessing Skills

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Remark
1	I can complete a task by finding links quickly usin g the library website	67(17%)	156(40%)	121(31%)	47(12%)	Agreed
2	I get the results of searches quickly when using the links on the library website	59(15%)	148(38%)	140(36%)	44(11%)	Agreed
3	The links responded without errors when locating information	41(11%)	102(26%)	192(49%)	56(14%)	Disagreed
4	The library website responded quickly when loading	53(14%)	107(27%)	189(48%)	42(11%)	Disagreed
5	It does not take too much steps to complete a task	32(8%)	184(47%)	112(29%)	63(16%)	Agreed
	Total	**252(65%)**	**697(178%)**	**754(193%)**	**252(64%)**	
	Average	**50(13%)**	**140(35%)**	**151(39%)**	**50(13%)**	Disagreed

Keys: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 1 shows the level of linkage usability and students harnessing skills. Students agree that they complete a task finding links quickly using the library website with 156(40%) respondents and get the results of searches quickly when using the links on the library website with 148(38%) respondents and it does not take too much steps to complete a task 184(47%) respondents who indicated agreed, while, the links responded without errors when locating information 192(49%) respondents and the library website responded quickly when loading 189(48%) respondents who indicated disagreed. This implies that out of 391 respondents, majority with 151(39%) respondents indicated disagreed, followed by 140(35%) respondents who indicated agreed, and 50(13%) respondents indicated strongly agreed, while 50(13%) respondents indicated strongly

disagreed. Therefore, the level of linkage usability and students harnessing skills was disagreed by respondents.

Table 2: The Level of Websites Functionality and Students Harnessing Skills

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Remark
1	The library website is always functional	93(24%)	160(41%)	129(33%)	9(2%)	Agreed
2	The search facility provided on the library website is helpful	61(16%)	153(39%)	142(36%)	35(9%)	Agreed
3	I usually achieve what I want using the library website	54(14%)	108(28%)	194(49%)	35 (9%)	Disagreed
4	The information on the library website are usually accurate and up to date	82(21%)	117(30%)	183(47%)	9 (2%)	Disagreed
5	The library website usually covers sufficient topics that I try to explore	85(22%)	109(28%)	186(47%)	11(3%)	Disagreed
	Total	**375(97%)**	**647(166%)**	**834(212%)**	**99(25%)**	
	Average	**75(19%)**	**129(33%)**	**167(43%)**	**20(5%)**	**Disagreed**

Keys: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 2 shows the level of websites functionality and students harnessing skills. Students agree that the library website is always functional with 160(41%) respondents and the search facility provided on the library website is helpful 153(39%) respondents who indicated agreed, while, they usually achieve what they want using the library website 194(49%) respondents, the information on the library website are usually accurate and up to date 183(47%) respondents and the library website usually covers sufficient topics that i try to explore 186(47%) respondents who indicated disagreed. This implies that out of 391 respondents, majority with 167(43%) respondents indicated disagreed, followed by 129(33%) respondents who indicated agreed, and 75(19%) respondents indicated strongly agreed, while 20(5%) respondents indicated strongly disagreed. Therefore, the

level of websites functionality and students harnessing skills was disagreed by respondents.

Table 3: Level of Users' Satisfaction with the Use of the Library Websites

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Remark
1	I am satisfied with the organization of information on the library website	19(5%)	102(26%)	221(57%)	49(12%)	Disagreed
2	The library website is always available and accessible for my information needs	44(11%)	156(40%)	151(39%)	40(10%)	Agreed
3	Clicking on links on the library website takes me to what I expect	16(4%)	102(26%)	234(60%)	39 (10%)	Disagreed
4	I find the library website easy to understand	41(11%)	208(53%)	107(27%)	35(9%)	Agreed
5	The library website meets my information needs	21(5%)	132(34%)	189(48%)	49(13%)	Disagreed
	Total	**141(36%)**	**700(179%)**	**902(231%)**	**212(54%)**	
	Average	**28(7%)**	**140(36%)**	**180(46%)**	**43(11%)**	**Disagreed**

Keys: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 3 shows level of users' satisfaction with the use of the library websites. Students agree that the library website is always available and accessible for my information needs 156(40%) respondents and they find the library website easy to understand 208(53%) respondents indicated agreed, while, they satisfied with the organization of information on the library website 221(57%) respondents, clicking on links on the library website takes me to what i expect 234(60%) respondents and the library website meets my information needs 189(48%) respondents who indicated disagreed. This implies that out of 391 respondents, majority with 180(46%) respondents indicated disagreed, followed by 140(36%) respondents

who indicated agreed, and 43(11%) respondents indicated strongly disagreed, while 28(7%) respondents indicated strongly agreed. Therefore, the level of users' satisfaction with the use of the library websites was disagreed by respondents.

Discussion

Findings revealed that the Relationship between linkage usability and students harnessing skills was disagreed by respondents. However, the relationship between linkage usability and students harnessing skills with the links responded without errors when locating information and the library website responded quickly when loading who indicated disagreed. This finding agreed with Harazeem (2018) study on assessment of usability of library websites in selected Universities in the Northeast zone, Nigeria revealed that the usability of library websites depend on the network strength, as the network strength is poor so also students find it difficult to access the links and download information for their studies. This is because the study revealed that most of the students 65.6% find it difficult to access links within the library website.

Findings on research question two revealed that the relationship between websites functionality and students harnessing skills was disagreed by respondents. However, students usually achieve what they want using the library website, the information on the library website are usually accurate and up to date and the library website usually covers sufficient topics that students try to explore who indicated disagreed. This finding is in agreement with the study of Gbaje and Kotso (2014) on assessing the content of Nigeria academic library website, which revealed that library users' preferred using Google for their academic activities than using library websites.

Findings on research question three revealed that the level of users' satisfaction with the use of the library websites was disagreed by respondents. However, students indicated that they were not satisfied with the organization of information on the library website, clicking on links on the library website and the library website do not meets their information needs. This findings agreed with Butt, Qutab and Mahmood (2011) study on access and use of the Internet in the libraries of Lahore, Pakistan, which reveals that 209 (75%) respondents out of 280 (100%) indicated that they were not satisfied with the level of their library website and its service for academic activities.

Conclusion

The study concluded that network must be stable to make links usable without errors when locating information so as to meet the information needs of

the users. The study further concluded that, for library website to be effective and efficient to library user, internet need to be stable for utilization and functionality of the website. The library website must also be user friendly with accurate information resources to support teaching and learning process.

Recommendations

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

1. University management should provide reliable network to support access to links without errors when loading so as to support teaching and learning process.
2. The libraries and university management should provide means that would ensure the functionality of their library websites so as to enhance and harness students' accessing skills
3. The library management should ensure the organization of information on the library website is up to standard to meet the needs of its users so as to support teaching and learning process.

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