

Full Length Research

Strategies to Enhance Access and Use of E-Resources by Postgraduate Students in Selected University Libraries in Kisii County, Kenya

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Electronic information resources subscribed into by academic libraries play a vital role in addressing varied user information needs and engender research and development among them. However, recent studies have indicated that there is limited access and use e-resources among postgraduate students in academic and research institutions in Kenya. Low consumption of e-resources has been attributed to limited awareness of existing about e-resources, poor training on access and uses the resources, lack of access to computers facilities for access, poor internet connectivity, and lack of information searching skills among others. This study was to assess the strategies to enhance access and use of e-resources by postgraduate students in selected academic libraries in Kisii County, Kenya. A survey research design aimed at identifying library users' opinion on the access and use of e-resources was used. Stratified sampling was used to identify the students-respondents and simple random sampling used to select the library staff. While questionnaires were employed to collect data from postgraduate students and library staff, library staff in-charge of e-resources were interviewed. The study sample comprised eighty (88) postgraduate students and library staff out of a population of six hundred and seventy two (672). The data to be collected will be analysed using SPSS according to the research objectives and presented using tables, bar graphs and pie charts. The study showed among other findings, that there are increased access and use of library resources and services through the adoption and use of strategies identified in this study.

Keywords: E-Resources, Access, Use, Academic Library

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INTRODUCTION

Advancements in technology have changed the way information is acquired, selected, stored retrieved and disseminated. Adoption and use of information communication technologies in libraries have resulted to libraries stocking both print and non-print resource where the latter no longer requires users to physically visit to access and use library materials. Hawthorne (2008) tracks electronic resources in libraries back to the mid-1960s with the introduction of the machine readable catalogue, which was followed by Online Public Access Catalogues (OPACs). He notes that bibliographic databases were developed in late 1960s, followed by CD-ROM databases in the late 1980s, then online databases. Web-based (internet) databases came into being towards the turn of the 21st century, which also saw the introduction of electronic serials and electronic books. In 1990; e-resources such as e-journals, e-books and full-text databases have emerged as important sources of information (Nisonger, 2003). Nisonger also noted that these e-resources allow users who have internet access to search and retrieve information from anywhere and anytime. Pantry (1997) added that it is now possible for users to have cheap and effective access to information which was previously not accessible or even known.

Over the years, due to rise of technology, libraries are now managing and housing more than just books. Technology has penetrated all areas of life and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is commonplace in the 21st century (Adegboye, 2011). Libraries use ICT for better service and satisfying diverse user needs. Libraries have transformed into digital and virtual libraries where books, journals, and magazines have changed into e-books and e-journals. This has increased the global dissemination of information. Electronic resources are easily accessible in remote areas. Electronic resources solve storage problems and control the flood of information (Adegboye, 2011). Print sources are being digitized in order to promote and engender utility. Technology has revolutionized the way libraries operate. Among them, the cost of materials in soft copy or digital are much cheaper and delivery is almost instant after payments unlike when one had to wait for months for a printed book to be delivered. The rapid growth of new technologies has changed the communication process and reduced the cost of communication for individuals. Electronic information sources can be seen as the most recent development in information technology and are among the most powerful tools ever invented in human history. Electronic information sources are becoming more and more important for the academic community (Adegboye, 2011). Malinconico (1995) noted users find the electronic resources attractive and use them more heavily than print sources as a result, libraries in response to the needs of

their users and overwhelmed by the problems posed by the print journal, for example delays in publication and delivery, are increasingly making electronic information resources available through the use of the Internet and other digital formats such as CD ROMs and CD formats. Kenyan universities just like other African universities have not been left behind as far as proliferation of electronic information resources and electronic networking is concerned. Kavulya, (2004) citing Agalo, (1998) asserts that there is evidence of departure from total reliance on print-based information to the use of electronic and digital techniques in information storage and access.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic libraries are committed to providing access to electronic and print resources to support the research and curricula since effective and conscious utilization Information Communication Technology (ICT) applications results to the rise of e-resource access and utility (Bashorun, Isah, & Adisa, 2011). ICT has become one dominant feature in academic libraries its applications of computers, Internet-based facilities, printers, laminators, faxes and photocopiers have resulted to improved library services such as circulation, reference, interlibrary loans and information services being rendered more efficiently, timely and accurately (Mamafha, Ngulube, & Ndwandwe, 2014).

As such, libraries' users access information through searching the library online catalogue; use a subject guide or database to access a citation from the Internet or access a full text article from Web-based journals; they may browse an electronic journal; e-mail a reference question via the ask-a-librarian service or borrow an e-book all by remote access (Bashorun et al., 2011). Therefore, it follows that library users are no longer obliged to visit the library at regular open hours to meet all their information needs.

The indispensable role of e-resources in libraries is to develop convenient library service delivery daily basis; to support the user community in fulfilling their information needs by making available the maximum possible information resources; to assist the user in tracing non-print material in libraries; to offer quality information services to the users, thus helping them in attaining superior academic skills; and to have proficient control over the workings of the library as a whole (Muswazi & Yumba, 2007). E-resources are embedded with a wealth of information whose exploitation can positively transform research world and propagate academic research management, foster teaching and learning, comply with university legislations and cater for university modes of

study (Omallah, 2013). In India, Kaur and Verma (2009) attempted to study issues like the use of electronic information resources, their impact on the collection of print and e-journals, awareness among the users, and places where the users can access these resources. Swain and Panda (2007) and Madhusudhan (2010) explored undergraduates, postgraduates and professional librarians and found that e-resources were being used and could be good substitutes for conventional resources if the access was fast and more computers were installed to provide better services.

E-resources is a very broad term that includes a variety of different publishing models, including OPACs, CD-ROMs, online database, e-journals, e-books, internet resource, print-on-demand (POD), e-mail publishing, wireless publishing, electronic link and web publishing. In this context the term refers to any electronic product that delivers collection of data either in text, numerical, graphical, or time based, as a commercially available resource (Haridasan & Khan, 2009). Sharma (2009) identifies e-resources to include journals, data archives, manuscripts, maps, books, magazines, theses, newspapers, e-mail, research reports, and bibliographic databases. Ibrahim (2004) adds library websites, online catalogues, and online reference works, while Aramide and Bolarinwa (2010), mention A-V resources, instructional audio tapes, instructional video tapes, VCD/DVD, radio, television, multimedia projectors, e-resources-electronic databases, e.g., JSTOR, ERIC, e-documents, Internet/e-mail facility, CD-ROMS, computers, telephone facility (GSM/Landline), VSAT, printers, and digital cameras.

Tella, Tella, Ayeni and Omoba (2007) argue that the students' ability to find and retrieve information effectively is a transferable skill useful for their future life as well as enabling the positive and successful use of the electronic resources whilst at school. Skills learning is essential in a technology driven environment but can be enhanced tremendously through the use of innovative learning strategies (Lawson, 2005). Brophy (1993) argues that libraries must reach a position where the acquisition of information skills is acknowledged as one of the key learning objectives for every university student entering a university, so that no student leaves without being fully equipped to cope up with the information world- the information society- as an end- user. The library has not only ready and free information highway, but also the adequate and efficient information transport means, which allows the readers to use the tools and obtain the information they need (Shuling, 2007).

Okiy, (2005) noted the following obstacles have hindering access and use of electronic resources in academic libraries: Poor and inadequate telecommunication facilities; Poor level of computer literacy; Poor level of computer facilities; Poor level of awareness of Internet facilities among policy makers; and

government officials and the ruling class in general and minimum involvement of academic institutions in the networks building in Africa. According to INASP (2005), use of electronic resources in Africa is greatly hampered by the following factors: lack of library automation systems; poor ICT facilities; lack of electronic information resources; poor connectivity to the Internet, poor funding; lack of management support; and lack of user education in use of electronic information resources and low bandwidth.

Academic libraries continue to increase their investment in IT, become aware of the importance of users' IT adoption and usage as critical prerequisites for library service delivery, understanding users' needs, library automation and users' training are increasing e-resources utility (Hong, Thong, & Tam, 2006). Welch (2005), observes that, keeping the library close to the surface on an organization's website can help connect users, especially newcomers, with library resources. Whithers, (2000), also adds that cataloguing of electronic information resources facilitates easy access which would result in high usage of electronic information resources following a standard classification scheme.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study the authors employed a mixed approach where both qualitative and quantitative approaches are executed. This approach was selected since it allowed the researchers to enter into the respondent's personal world in order to gain a deeper and clear understanding of their knowledge, experiences and feelings (Creswell, 1998).

Research was done among selected universities in Kisii County and the study population consisted of 672 respondents. The selected campuses for this study were Kisii University main campus, University of Nairobi Kisii Campus and Mount Kenya University Kisii Campus. The respondents were postgraduate universities' students accessing e-resources and the library staff members who aid in access and utilisation of the said library materials. According to Israel (2012), the sample size for the study was calculated as follows;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

n= Sample size

N= target population

e= Confidence level. A confidence level was;

$$n = \frac{672}{1 + 672(0.1)^2} = 87.0466$$

Thus, n=88

Whereas stratified sampling technique was used to sample postgraduate students based on programmes enrolled, simple random sampling was employed to select library staff members. Both structured and unstructured questionnaires were used to collect data from students and some library staff whilst, library staff in-charge of e-resources were interviewed due to their regular interaction with library users.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In relation to access and utilization of e-resources in academic libraries, respondents were asked to state how they came to know of the existence of e-resources. 48.15% of the respondents were males who had had access and use of e-resources and 33.85% were females in the same group whereas the remaining 8.49% of the respondents were males who neither knew of resources nor accessed them. Respondents who didn't have knowledge and skills to search e-resources had not previously had a chance to access and use e-resources. It's clear that the highest percentage represents male respondents which are followed closely with the female counterparts. In order to address the first objective, respondents were asked to state how postgraduate students use e-resources to improve their studies. They were also asked to indicate how they became aware of e-resources. All respondents indicated that they had been introduced to e-resources by library staff but stated that e-resources have not been exploited to the optimum.

This study further observed that respondents access and use e-resources at different levels and time ranging from daily, weekly, once a semester, rarely and others as under;

From table 1, 52.27% respondents was the highest record who reported to use e-resources on a daily,

followed by 28.41% respondents for weekly access and use. 2.27% respondents indicated to have rarely accessed and used e-resources. 52.27% respondents who access e-resources daily is above average making it clear that little needs to be done to maximise access. All respondents who were contacted observed that regular user training, current awareness, marketing of e-resources and stable internet resources are required to strengthen access and use of e-resources. 11.36% respondents were found particularly unaware of existence of e-resources, it is imperative that intensive marketing and sensitization has not been done to ensure all library users are informed.

When asked about the challenges that are currently facing the full access and use of e-resources in academic libraries in Kisii County, 51% respondents cited internet failure, 36% cited lack of training and 13% indicated lack willingness from other library users promote their utility. While interviewing the library staff, they reported that management is in the process of improving internet services in order to serve customers well. Although training has been conducted in the past, they did not suffice to improve access and use of e-resources. Despite immense advancement in internet supply in Kenya, some institutions of higher learning still are suffering its deficiency. More investment to ICT infrastructure is required in order to maintain relevance in this digital age especially in information provision. Ability to provide timely and relevant information based on user needs is an indispensable ability all library staff must endeavour to acquire and nurture.

According to Wamalwa & Omallah, (2016) libraries have invested heavily on technology just to serve their clients better. In this research, computer and mobile phone technologies were found relevant in supporting provision of e-resources services.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study sought to address strategies to enhance access and use of e-resources in selected universities in Kisii County. Academic libraries have invested immensely in the provision of e-resources to their patrons by subscribing or purchasing them and employing trained and qualified staff to provide much needed services. E-resources are used to serve clients remotely, promote research and development, and supplement print copies where possible.

Regarding the types of e-resources accessed and used in libraries, it was observed that they are changing each due to technological changes. As such, regular training for both staff and patrons is imperative. Library management involved in collection development must develop a sound policy with users in mind. This will go a long way with addressing user needs.

Table 1: Level of access and use of e-resources

Level of usage	Rating
Daily	46(52.27%)
Weekly	25(28.41%)
Once a semester	5(5.68%)
Rarely	2(2.27%)
Others	10(11.36%)

In order to enhance usage of e-resources, library user, library staff and library management must work in a concerted effort to ensure better service delivery. All stakeholders to be taken through necessary training to improve their functioning. Proper communication is required among all parties in order to serve and be served better.

Libraries and information centres to install current information communication technologies in order to remain relevant in information provision. Library automation is the option where computer and mobile phone technologies are embraced in information provision. Additionally, library management system should be incorporated as an interface for patron-library interaction venue. If this is done, user needs will have been addressed.

Following the above findings, here are the recommendations of this study. Librarians and information professionals to stock more e-resources as this will save space, tiring shelving and repairs. As a result, this calls for a lot of financial implications to establish an ICT platform to sustain access and use of e-resources. However, when the system is installed, its benefits override the misgivings. Additionally, the Government of Kenya has launched Digi-School where elementary school going children are provided with Laptops loaded with their programmes to be covered in school. Therefore, this study will become handy in laying a foundation for access and use of e-resources. It will go a long way with providing information for the teachers who are going to teach these children

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