

Awareness and Digitization of School Library Resources in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the awareness and digitization of school libraries in Akwa Ibom State. The main objective of the study was to examine the extent of awareness of librarians on digitization of school library resources in private secondary schools and the software used in digitization and to further examine if the school librarians have the necessary skills for digitization of the library resources in Akwa Ibom State. Out of about 150 private secondary schools in the state, 25 were randomly sampled for the study. This study adopts cognitive flexibility theory. The design for the study was descriptive survey. The data were analysed using percentages and charts. The result of the findings indicated that librarians in Akwa Ibom State school libraries are aware of the digitization technology; but the extent of planning for digitization is low in their libraries. It was noticed that there are inadequate facilities in the libraries for digitization. The study further revealed that the school librarians do not have the skills for the implementation of digitization in the school libraries. Among the recommendations made was that school librarians should be trained and retrained for information skills acquisition.

Keywords: Awareness, School library, Digitization, Information skills, Information resources, ICT.

Introduction

Schools are the building blocks of the society. The backbone of the educational, recreational and informational activities of the school is the school library. On the other hand, the school library is the bedrock of academic development in the children. The roles and influences of the school library (School Media Resources Center) to the educational growth of children in every nation are overwhelming. This is due to the foundation it lays in the minds of the young ones. It is the centre of intellectual activities in the school system. Just as nobody can ever graduate in life without attending a primary school so also is the usefulness of this library to the growth and development of the individual in the society. Therefore, there is need to pay attention to the development of the collections in the school libraries because these are service - delivery centers for educational institutions at that level. These libraries according to Yaya (2015) support the curricula and satisfy the information needs of young students both in primary and secondary schools in Nigeria. The resources of these libraries are majorly books and audio visual resources, especially those in the public schools. (The study particularly is focused on private schools as they are believed to collect and provide these resources not only in print but also in electronic format). In some private schools, the library collects all sorts of resources even in electronic formats. These resources are expected to be in the custody of qualified librarians who are aware of the transformation from a traditional library to digitized one.

Presently, children are born into the technology environment, that is, into an environment with all sorts of electronic gadget. By age five, a child is already able to operate phones, tablets, computers, etc. They do not just operate but understand how these gadget works. By the time they get into the post primary schools, they are already heavy users of the e-resources be it in book form, films, etc.

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Therefore, the school environment which the library is part of is expected to provide these facilities to attract these students to the use of library facilities. With this in mind, the need for digitization of school library resources cannot be overemphasized since it is a widely accepted fact that the development of good values and wealth depends to a great extent on the development of school libraries in a nation.

Digitization is a new upbringing for achieving any library's goal. It necessitates the implementation of information and communication technology (ICT) innovations in the capturing, storing, organizing and conservation of media resources in libraries. It is a procedure that guarantees an excellent library and information service delivery. Library digitization is a development by which information resources in libraries are transformed from the print format to electronic formats. It is an essential activity in the modern libraries (Ndum, Ebong & Gilean, 2012). Digitizing the resources of the school library will however enhance access, visibility and effective utilization of the resources. It will also be a guide to the parents who will use the opportunity to help in training their children at home on the use of library resources. This will not be sufficient, if the librarians in these libraries are not ICT compliant, competent and sufficiently exposed to the new trends in technology, to be able to keep and provide necessary services to these digitized students in the library.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided the study:

1. To find out the awareness level of the school librarians on digitization of private school library resources in Akwa Ibom State.
2. To find out the extent to which ICT facilities are available for digitization in private school libraries in Akwa Ibom State.
3. To find out the level of ICT competency of the school librarians in Akwa Ibom State

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in the study:

1. What is the awareness level of the school librarians on digitization of private school library resources in Akwa Ibom State?
2. To what extent are ICT facilities available in private school libraries for digitization in Akwa Ibom State?
3. What is the ICT competencies level of school librarians in private schools in Akwa Ibom State?

Statement of the Problem

One of the strategic objectives of any library system is to preserve and conserve information resources for the future posterity of educational development. Today, this depends on application of modern technology. Digitization is one aspect of technology that preserves and conserves information resources. School library resources are relevant information resources to be digitised for posterity, this is because, its uses enhance the realization of overall objective of teaching and learning. They contain lot of new ideas, innovations in certain subject areas to boost students' academic achievement. They give insight into the developments/trends in specific areas. They are meant to motivate students to progress in their academic endeavours. The problem of low performance of secondary school students in their academic pursuits may be occasioned by inadequate; inappropriate acquisition and preservation of these school library resources which has been a serious concern to parents and education stakeholders. The problem seems to be getting worse now with the recent economic recession at hand where parents cannot afford to acquire relevant information resources for their wards. The school library is supposed to be students' university. However, the traditional method of preserving these school library resources is inefficient in Nigerian school libraries. This development may engender learning thus, making learning to become passive and students become less creative, receptive to problem-solving and no longer used to critical thinking. This may likely affect the performance of students in different subject's areas. Besides, some of these information resources are decaying in library shelves and the school libraries have no proper way of preserving them. The digitization of these resources will preserve these endangered library resources; improve efficiency of information search mechanisms, and improve access to students and teachers. But, the digitization projects in Nigerian school libraries are not spreading fast and as such most school libraries and education stakeholders seem not to be aware of digitization processes.

The concern therefore is, are the school librarians aware of the digitization technology? and do they have the competencies necessary for digitization of library resources? This study seeks to investigate the extent of awareness of digitization of school library resources in Akwa Ibom State.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts cognitive flexibility theory as reported by Fabunmi and Fabunmi (2006). This theory was propounded by Spiro, Vispoel, Schmitz, Samarapungavan & Boeger in 1987 and updated by Spiro, Coulson, Feltovich & Anderson in 1988. The cognitive flexibility theory has the following goals (1) helping people to learn important, but difficult subject matter; (2) fostering adaptively flexible use of knowledge in real-world settings; (3) changing underlying ways of thinking, that is, epistemological beliefs and habits of mind; and (4) developing hypermedia learning environments to promote complex learning and flexible knowledge application. The theory employs the multiple knowledge representations approach.

This theory is suitable to the study because according to Fabunmi and Fabunmi (2006) several users can use the same library material the same time and in different locations, without disturbing each other. The use of the digital library is also very flexible. Library users are not restricted to the official library hours of a conventional library. The digital library permits random access to library materials. This enables learners to consult wide variations of learning materials at their convenience, thus making learning easy. The library users consult library materials with the hope of learning from them; hence the cognitive flexibility theory is very suitable for illustration, as it is a learning theory.

Literature Review

The advancement in educational sector and in the libraries is amalgamated concepts, both being essentially and closely related to each other. None survives without the other. (Etim, Ebong & Gilead, 2012). The school library according to Colorado Department of Education (CDE) (2014) is “a dedicated facility located in and administered by the school that provides at least the following: an organized, circulating collection of printed and/or audio-visual and/or computer-based resources, or a combination thereof; paid staff; an established schedule during which services of the staff are available to students and faculty; instruction on using library materials to support classroom standards and improve student research and literacy skills.” In a nutshell, this means the school library must not only have organized and circulating resources but also staff who are well paid to provide the needed services. Well paid staff will go extra miles to assist the students and make sure that the library and the resources are effectively and efficiently used.

According to UNESCO/IFLA Manifesto on school library (1999), the school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today’s information and knowledge-based society. The school library equips students with life-long learning skills and develops the imagination, enabling them to live as responsible citizens. The school library offers learning services, books and resources that enable all members of the school community to become critical thinkers and effective users of information in all formats and media. The goal of all school libraries is to develop information literate students who are responsible and ethical participants in the society. Information literate students are competent self-directed learners who are aware of their information needs and actively engage in the world of ideas. To stress on the importance of the school library, Bello (2013) reiterated that the library is one of the most significant arm of a school and the major objective is to make information resources available to support the school’s curriculum and to promote reading.

The library setting encourages self-directed learning. The library environment according to Cohn, Kelsey & Fiels (as cited by Bello, 2013) fosters cooperation and group work. In addition to these, the school library also provides services such as: teaching the skills of using and appreciating books; developing interest in reading through story hour, book talks and group activities; creating awareness for library collection through displays and preparation of book list; working with teachers to plan class assignment and project that will require the use of library resources to complete the task; encouraging the use of skills in design, creative writing, production and use of instructional media to teachers and pupils; creating a circulate system that will facilitate the effective use of learning resources in the school library; and production of instructional materials.

Unfortunately, the story of school library today is different. Almost all the public schools in Nigeria, Akwa Ibom State inclusive can only boast of rooms kept aside to store the available books in the school, man by non-librarians or para-professionals but of course not opened for utilization by the students.

Even when opened, the students are not encouraged to use them. From observations, all hope is not lost as the prerequisite for running a private school is the establishment of a standard school library for teaching, learning and recreation of the students. The library does not only acquire print resources but also non-print and with the technology age some of these libraries are ready to go digital. It is not enough to establish a library that is well equipped and ready to digitize but those who man these libraries must be aware of the digitization trend and its technology. Awareness is the knowledge about something that exists or understanding of a situation or subject at the present time based on information or experience (Ani and Ahiauzu, 2008). It can also be seen as knowledge or perception of a situation, fact, consciousness, recognition, realization, grasp and acknowledgement concerned about and well-informed interest or familiarity in a particular situation or development. Awareness is core to usage of digital information resources. Awareness of the changes in technology in recent years according to Tsakomas and Papatheodorou (as cited by Akpojotor, 2016) has dramatically altered how information is accessed, stored and disseminated. Awareness can create room for a lot of things even library digitization.

Library digitization is a new environment for achieving an old goal. It is an old goal in the sense that it entails the adoption of technological innovations in the capturing, storage, organization and preservation of library and information resources. It is a process that ensures effective library and information service delivery. Library digitization is a process through which library materials are converted from the hard copies to electronic copies. Digitization is an integral part of the library's activities. According to National Library of Australia (as cited by Etim, Ebong& Gilead, 2012), digitization is a process of creating digital surrogates (version) of analogue materials from the library's collection. Activity cycle for digitization includes: capturing, storage, management and long term preservation and most importantly disseminating these digitized information in the libraries for the information society. This technology enhances ease of access to information resources globally without physical barriers. In the African context, digitization refers to "conversion of non-digital materials to digital form (Tsebe, 2005). Digitization removes physical barriers and for today's students, who derive satisfaction in gadget fidgeting, find these resources most interesting to utilize in digital format.

Research Methodology

The design for the study was descriptive survey. Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria was the study area. Akwa Ibom State shares boundaries with Cross River State in the North, Abia State in West, Rivers State in the South and Cameroon in the East. Akwa Ibom State is one of the 36 States in Nigeria. The state has a department called Ministry of Education that takes charge of education matters. This Ministry of Education is sub-divided into eight educational zones for easy management and supervision of secondary schools. The population of the study was all school librarians in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Private schools were used for the study because it is assumed they have ICT facilities and also have in their employ librarians/paraprofessionals. Out of 150 private schools, 25 schools were purposively sampled because they had qualified school librarians (First degree in Library and Information Science) for the study. A structured questionnaire titled "Awareness and Digitization of Library Resources Questionnaire" (ADLRQ) was developed and used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. Section A sought information on librarians' awareness of digitization technology; Section B sought information on availability of information and communication technology facilities and section C sought information on librarians' competency level. The obtained data from the questionnaire were used for analysis. The data were analyzed using simple percentages and charts.

Results and Discussion of Findings

The 25 school librarians responded to all the items in the questionnaire. The results for answering research questions 1, 2 and 3 raised are summarized below.

Table 1: School Librarians' Awareness of Digitization Technology

S/N	Items	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	I am aware of digitization technology available for school libraries	18(72)	7(28)
2	I am aware of digitization software used in digitization of library resources	6(24)	19(76)
3.	There are plans to digitize my school library's collections	2(8)	23(92)
4.	The school management is aware of the digitization technology available for school libraries	21(84)	4(16)

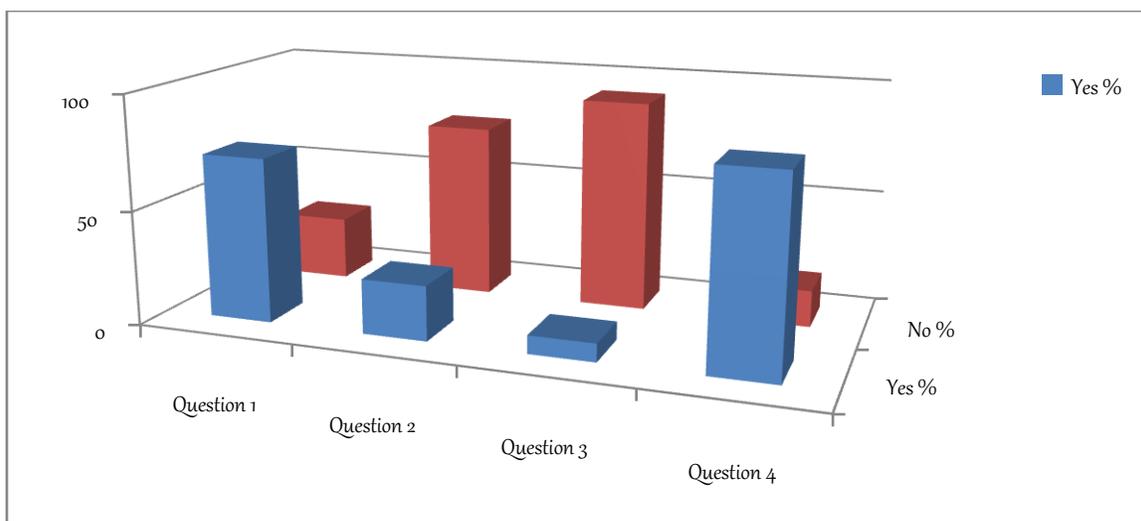


Table 1 and chart provided above indicated that the school librarians’ awareness of digitization technology is high with the score of (72%) while only 28% show lack of awareness of digitization technology available to them in the school libraries. 24% of the school librarians agreed that they are aware of the digitization software. On the other hand, majority of the schools’ librarians lack the awareness. Only 8% of the respondents agreed that there are plans to digitize the collections of their library, while a greater percentage (92%) responded that there are no plans to digitize the collections of their libraries. Positively, majority of the respondents affirm 84% that the schools’ management are aware of the digitization technology available for school libraries.

Table 2: ICT Facilities’ Availability in School Libraries

S/N	Items	Available	Not Available
1.	Computers	√	
2	Scanners	√	
3.	Photocopying machines		√
4	Printers		√
5	Digital Cameras		√
6	Stabilizers	√	
7	Uninterruptible power supply(UPS)	√	
8	Internet facilities	√	
9	Web Cam		√
10	Barcode Readers		√

Table 2 shows the availability of ICT facilities such as computers, scanners, stabilizers, Uninterrupted Power Supply(UPS)and internet facilities and also indicated that photocopying machines, printers, digital cameras and web cam are not available in these libraries.

Table 3:ICT Competency Level of School Librarians on Digitization

S/N	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Computer literacy skills	20	80
2.	Book-marking skills	3	12
3.	Internet surfing skills	16	64
4	Characterization skills	2	8
5	Signing of digital signature	3	12
6.	Web-linking	5	20
7	Online Cataloguing	4	16
8.	Information retrieval skills	13	52

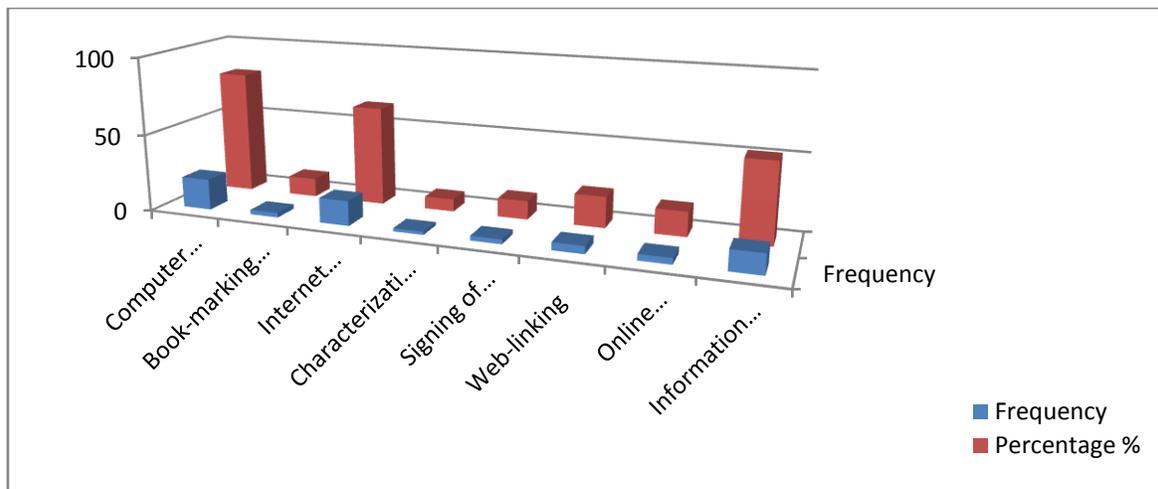


Table 3 and the chart above show the level of proficiency of school librarians digitization skills' competency. One can infer from the table that the school librarians' computer literacy skill is very high at 80%, high Internet surfing skills (64%) and information retrieval skills (52%). The result also shows that the librarians have low bookmarking skills at 12%. Similarly, signing of digital signature (12%), web linking (20%) and online cataloguing skills(16%).

Discussion of Findings

Awareness Level of Digitization Technology

The findings from the study have established that a greater percentage of school librarians in private secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State are aware of the digitization technology in libraries. But they are not aware of the digitization software that are available for the digitization of school library resources. Equally noted is that, the management of these schools are aware of the digitization technology available for their school libraries but they have no plans to digitize their collections. This is a serious concern for the school libraries that are directly managed by their proprietors. This corroborates with Bello (2013) views that, most computerized systems in school libraries failed because of administrative bottle necks from the parent organizations. This implies that the non readiness to digitize by the schools' management is a serious impediment to the implementation and functionality of digitization project in school libraries.

Availability of Facilities for Digitization

The findings revealed that there are some indications of the availability of ICT facilities in the library but the facilities like digital camera and scanners that would really enhance digitization are not available in the libraries. This is also in line with a research carried out in Ekiti State, Nigeria, by Adeyemi and Olaleye (2010) who noted that many schools in Ekiti State are deficient in the availability of relevant information and communication technology (ICT) equipment and facilities. This is an indication that ICT materials are not vigorously provided for the schools and it suggests that, the State is not fully ready to imbibe digitization technology. This agrees with Pandey and Misara (2014) that the inadequate technology infrastructures constitute serious bottleneck to digitization in Africa.

Librarians' ICT Competency Level

The study also revealed that most of the school librarians have computer skills, internet surfing skills but do not have the skills on bookmarking, online cataloguing web linking, characterization and signing of digital signature which are very important skills that are needed for digitization. This is in relation with Bello (2013) assertion that, lack of technical expertise and support can be very frustrating to the librarians in their service delivery in this electronic age. In a similar research carried out at the University of Lagos, Nigeria, Okiki (2011) reported the following challenges of e-learning to include but not limited to high cost of hardware in Africa; computer technology illiteracy among the students. All these affect the ease of the learning process.

Conclusion

The goal of digitizing library materials is for preservation, visibility, accessibility and effective utilization of the school library resources. The application of this technology in the school libraries will inject the information skills into the students thereby preparing them for future. Based on the findings, it was concluded that librarians to a greater extent are aware the digitization technology available for libraries, though some facilities for digitization are available but pertinent ones are unavailable. Moreso, the schools' management s are aware of this technology but are not ready for digitization of their schools' libraries and most importantly, the librarians have some of the skills to handle digitization of their schools' libraries. The school libraries should be digitized for effective service provision to the students.

Recommendations

Stemming from the findings it's recommended that:

1. The school librarians should be properly trained to acquire the necessary skills for digitization of the library resources.
2. Digitization is capital intensive project, and as such the parents' body and stakeholders should make provision for funding so that the resources could be digitized.
3. Appropriate and adequate ICT facilities should be acquired into the libraries to enhance digitization.

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