

Management of Electronic Books in Nigerian University Libraries

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Abstract

This study examined E-book management in academic libraries in three of Nigeria first generation university libraries in South West region. The study adopted mixed method technique. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses of the data collected showed that Nigerian university libraries have embraced e-books subscription, and that relevance of e-books to subjects offered in the universities were the guiding principle when subscribing to ebook databases. The study revealed that users friendliness of the database interface were major factor when when subscribing. However, management problem areas identified in this study consisted of University policies, funding, attitude of staffing students and changes in information technology Infrastructure. Consequently, it was recommended that heads of library should subscribed to ebooks with users friendly interface, increase of fund by the University mamangement. It was also recommended that electronic information resources librarians should integrate such e-books into the WEBOPAC.

Keywords: Management, Use, E-books, University Libraries, Nigeria

1.1. Background to the Study

The university library is the bedrock upon which any institution is built in order to achieve her primary aim of teaching, learning, research, and provision of community services. Every university library has the major aim of providing information materials that support teaching, learning, and research. Information can be stored in books, periodicals (such as newspapers, professional journals,) machine-readable databases, manuscripts, archival materials and in many other formats. According to Ashaver and Bem-Bura (2013), university libraries are the depositories of knowledge that provide a vital role for national development. Being an integral part of the university, the library collects materials in various format either published or unpublished, and these materials are in almost all fields of knowledge, sometimes spanning beyond not necessarily in those offered in the university. However, the value of the records of human communication lies in the information which libraries contain. In the view of Koren (2010) citing Ranganathan (1892-1972): Libraries grow and change and will always do so. Collections increase and change. Change comes along with growth and in order to be healthy, that growth and change require flexibility in the management of the collections, in the use of space, in the recruitment, retention, and deployment of staff and nature of programmes.

Academic and research libraries have been considered to be early adopters of e-books. According to a survey done by the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) on 75 member libraries, the earliest purchases were in the 1990s with packages like netLibrary, but most libraries Nigeria started adopting e-books began (Anson and Connell, 2009). Khan and Khan (2010) states that collection development policy reflects the policy, mission, and objectives of the University Libraries by providing the background to collection development and guidance in building quality and relevant collections. It outlines the underlying principles and guidelines in the selection, acquisition, evaluation, and maintenance of library resources.

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It provides consistency among those responsible for developing the collections and defines the responsibilities among the librarians and faculties. It also helps to communicate the Libraries' policies concerning collection goals and methods to faculty, students, staff and users. As academic programs, information needs and technology change, the collection development policy will be revised to meet the changing needs.

Reitz, (2014) defines e-books as digital versions of traditional print books that are readable across a variety of computing platforms including PCs, tablets, smartphones and purpose-designed agents, known as e-book readers. And this has grown to become a global phenomenon, with reading devices available across the globe (Weinstein, 2010). Vasileiou and Rowley (2010) revealed that e-books are a central element of the information experience of the academic population, including staff and undergraduate and postgraduate students. Addressing the issue of e-books in academia, Nelson (2010) suggests that e-books as a device, as “potential substitute technologies” so they can be compared more directly “with their digital counterparts with respect to pros and cons relative to the changing environment”. Similarly, Fyfe. (2014) avers the Ebooks have the potential to engage with three key strategic priorities common of any university and are: to enhance the student experience and academic outcomes within an increasingly competitive environment; to drive innovation in learning, teaching, and research; and to help to use space and human resources more effectively and efficiently. Hence, a collection of e-books in academic communities is driven by this potentiality.

The integration and adoption of e-books in universities libraries are of great benefit to the learning community as users can remotely access available resources around the clock, and by so doing lead to saving physical space in the library, prevention from book mutilation and lost. and seamless integration into the library management system. The low deployment and adoption of e-books by Nigerian universities libraries like most technologies could be attributed economic factors, ICT readiness, and users' attitude and lack of collection development policy with regards to e-books. A study carried out on ebooks usage by Abdullah and Gibb (2008) in higher education institute attributed the low level of use of ebooks to low user's awareness and desire to learn more about ebooks. Based on literature, many Nigerian students know about, use or have used ebooks for their various academic exercises. However, according to Nwagwu and Okarfor (2013), they encounter ebooks through blind search for educational information on the web and not necessarily through their institutional libraries.

Khan and Khan (2010) stated that collection development policy reflects the policy, mission, and objectives of the University Libraries by providing the background to collection development and guidance in building quality and relevant collections. Collection management and collection development now often are used synonymously. However, the phrase 'collection management' according to Kennedy (2018) is defined as a process of information gathering, communication, coordination, policy formulation, evaluation, and planning. These processes, in turn, influence decisions about the acquisition, retention, and provision of access to information sources in support of the intellectual needs of a given library community. Collection development is the part of collection management that primarily deals with decisions about the acquisition of materials.

As e-books become mainstream and the percentage of academic publications delivered in electronic format increases, there is a need for Nigerian university libraries to harmonize e-books that are available with the print collection by creating visibility for them through the WEBOPAC. Thus, the need to find out processes of management of e-books in the universities libraries. To explore this question, we sought to understand first factors affecting the management of e-books in the universities and how students use e-books to see if using the library's print collection informed student perceptions of e-book use as well as inhibiting factors in the use of e-books. To understand this, the following research questions were raised.

1.2. Research Questions

- i. What are the processes of collection management of e-books in the universities libraries?
- ii. How do students acquire needed skills on the use e-books for their academic purposes?
- iii. What are the factors inhibiting the use of e-books by users of the universities?

1.3. Previous Studies And Research Framework

A review of the literature in the context of this research clearly indicated the growing importance and use of e-books in academia, with a higher proportion of the monograph budget now being spent on e-books.

According to Angela Conyers et al (2017) the area of e-books is one filled with complexity from the perspective of acquisition, management and evaluation. With the widespread use of the World Wide Web, the availability of digital versions of a range of material and with user expectations therefore, changing the view and role of the traditional library from that of a building to visit in order to consult and borrow books and journals which is no longer applicable in much of the academic world. Kahn and Underwood (2013) quoted Anderson (2008) asserted that, “the library is not about books; it’s about information”. Thus, academic libraries must offer access to online resources or become obsolete, a concept very different to that of the traditional library where physical books played a major role. With a change in the way libraries operate comes the need for librarians to be willing and able to change as well. There are many challenges encountered by some collection development librarians about the collection management of e-books into the university libraries in Nigeria.

Zhao and Zhao (2010) averred that many libraries do not have comprehensive policies in place in terms of managing e-books. They noted further that standards for records have not yet been set which could be the reason policies have not yet been established (2010). According to Gardiner and Musto (2010), the reason the CD-ROM lost its appeal for libraries which led to publishers discontinuing their wide use is that libraries did not know how to catalog them. While MARC records are provided with many e-books, there is no standard as to their extensiveness (Zhao & Zhao 2010: 97; Schell 2011: 91). The collection development librarian must develop policies that include what sources are appropriate for selection, when and how much to weed, the “official stance” on intellectual freedom, censorship, copyright issues, and Internet use. These policies should be reevaluated yearly to maintain the accuracy and dependability of the collection. At the same time, these policies must remain accessible to the community and administration for perusal and if necessary, adjustment. Green (2004).

Vasileiou and Rowley (2008) quoting (Armstrong and Lonsdale, 2003) identified nine main difficult challenges of e-books, such as hardware and software issues; printing and copying matters; physical use; non-intuitive interface problems; management issues including cost and collection management; limited array of current titles and archiving issues; authentication matters (Athens); lack of information skills on the part of students; and, technophobia on the part of library staff and e-book publishers. Armstrong and Lonsdale (2005) identified bibliographical control of e-books as an area of concern for the authors who first reported on it in 2002. According to their report, it was confirmed that the lack of systematic bibliographical control is a major problem for academic librarians and has a negative influence upon selection. As observed by Walter (2013) nearly 90 percent of university libraries owned or subscribed to e-books. At the same time, however, most libraries have been tentative in their acquisition of e-books, confining their selections to reference works, textbooks, or specialized collections in particular subject areas.

Walter (2013) mentioned that current data revealed that the majority of university libraries spend less than six percent of their acquisitions funds on e-books; only one in twenty libraries spend 25 percent or more. Walter (2013) stated that, Maxim van Gisbergen, product manager for e-books at Swets, has acknowledged that several factors hinder the acceptance of e-books by faculty and librarians. These include publication delays, restrictive license terms, and limitations on the use of e-books for interlibrary loan, the absence of standardized e-book formats and access mechanisms, and the lack of transparency in publishers’ pricing and licensing models. Thus Walter (2013) inferred that librarians’ complaints are consistent with those of Gisbergen. In light of this, Tedd (2005) argued that part of the challenges faced by collection development librarians in university libraries are: the problem of aggregators and publishers which make e-books available provide a variety of licensing models which control how users may access the e-books. Therefore, making the libraries acquire e-books from a number of suppliers and so have to be aware of the different licensing models and also make sure that the users are aware of these. Tedd (2005) also mentioned the need to ‘integrate’ e-books properly with other items in the library’s catalog in form of MARC records, needs to be available. In the report given by Tedd (2005) in the study on “E-books in an academic library”, it was stated that for any digital source, there needs to be a programme of promotion. Similarly, Idowu and Oduwole (2011) present issues and challenges of electronic resources in Nigerian university libraries as operational, strategic and attitudinal.

These challenges are: Access control, Personnel and workload, overlapping coverage of the same title by multiple Vendors, Town and Gown initiative, Cost implications of e-resource subscription and other Collection Development issue (Print and Digital), Complexity of virtual library, e-resources computing facilities (Appropriate Hardware & Software), and Funding. These challenges, in turn, affect the collection management of e-books in Nigerian university libraries.

Thus, as concluded by Tedd (2005) collection development librarians are constantly challenged to keep up with developments in various aspects of their professional life, keeping abreast of relevant developments in the e-book world is yet another challenge for them. It's a common knowledge that academic libraries have adopted e-books widely, yet many users are still faced with difficulty hence a preference for print and lack of awareness of e-book availability. In a study conducted by Foasberg (2011) on college students' use of printed books and e-books revealed that 23.5 percent of students read e-books, out of which, only 3.7 percent reported that they used an e-reader as their preferred device. The others were familiar with e-books in other forms, such as computer or cell phone downloads. As for the difficulty of navigating, it was a problem with e-books singled out by the participants in all of the studies that addressed the question of their usability. Similarly, studies carried out by Berg, Hoffmann, & Dawson, (2010) examined how students use e-books and reported that students were confused by the variety of interfaces used by e-book platforms and found navigation within e-books difficult. In a related study, Foasberg, (2014) on student reading practices in print and electronic media, the study revealed that students were more likely to annotate or take notes on texts that were in print form, finding them more conducive to concentration, than when they read electronic texts.

1.4. Methodology

The study adopted mixed methods to elicit data from both librarians and undergraduate students. Interviews and personal experience were used for data collection from three electronic information resources librarians of the three first generation Nigerian university libraries in South West. The reason for the research scope was due to pedigree of the selected universities in terms of rich history, funding, national ranking and students' intake. Copies of questionnaire were used and purposively distributed to elicit data from 721 respondents who formed 10% of the undergraduate students' population of selected universities (see table 1). This is justified because some studies have used smaller samples in both qualitative and quantitative research with similar population size (Doherty, 2000; Sen,2006). Purposive sampling helps to select individuals who could provide information on management and use of e-books. The participants were selected from walking users of e-libraries who were undergraduate students and heads of electronic library unit of their respective library. The three Universities are Universities of Ibadan, University of Lagos and Obafemi Awolowo University. The researchers themselves conducted the interviews and distribution of copies of questionnaire after permission had been obtained from the library management. Qualitative data was analyzed using the thematic analysis technique. This enabled us identify themes that emerged from all the responses. In the same breath, quantitative data were analyzed using simple percentage rate and standard means.

Table 1. Selected University Libraries

University	Student population	Sampled population 10%
University of Ibadan	12,173	122
University of Lagos	30,757	308
Obafemi Awolowo University	29,256	292

1.5. Results

This section explains the results of data analysis and discussion of the findings in line with the research questions that guided the study

a) What are the processes of managing e-books content in the universities libraries?

The areas identified by the electronic information resources librarians in the three selected universities libraries revealed that cost, disciplines, and currency of the e-books were the major factors considered when selecting e-books.

The three University Libraries also considered relevance to the subjects offered in the universities and the friendly users' interface of the e-books platform. It was obvious from the discussions that libraries adopted a critical mass strategy that consists of focusing initial acquisitions on building a mass of subject-specific content large enough to encourage intense usage with a realistic assessment of user needs. This point was buttressed by one of the electronic information resources librarians who stated that:

“We put into consideration faculties and departmental need before subscribing to any electronic e-books databases as well as encouraging students to make maximum use”

It was unanimously agreed that the cost of buying e-books was not quite expensive compare to buying printed materials. They also maintained that e-books are worth subscribed to because they can be accessed by many users per time and that e-books are included in the acquisition policy and made to meet students' expectations. One of the Librarian was also of the view that:

“E-books were worth acquiring in respective of their cost as a result of paradigm shift in term of information access”

The interview also revealed the main sources of e-book acquisition by the selected academic libraries which were mainly through individual institution and consortia powered by Association of University Librarians of Nigerian Universities (AULNU). This done to reduce cost especially expensive electronic databases. Aside AULNU intervention, individual library procures e-books databases through direct contact to the publishers and aggregators. From the information given by all the three University Libraries, access to electronic books subscribed to by institutions are Internet Protocol (IP) based. Although, they all attested to the fact that some eBook providers did provide access through redeemable usernames/passwords.

In term of integration of e-books into OPAC, the consensus agreement is that: “vendors should supply MARC records in an easily-imported format to allow easy migration of bibliographic details of electronic book collections to be integrated into their OPAC systems”. It was ascertained by the researchers that users get to know about e-books subscription through there university and library website, university newsflash, library bulletin and through library advocacy program.

b). How do students acquire needed skills on the use of e-books for their academic purposes?

The electronic information resources librarians explained that they do carry out information literacy skill on use of e-books in their respective libraries. Other information literacy skills such as using the internet, retrieving information from online and extracting & managing information resources. The librarian at University of Lagos explained that:

“There is constant training of undergraduate students on the use of electronic databases and this is usually done at the resumption of the academic session”

c). What are the factors inhibiting the use of e-books by users of the University Libraries?

Demographic Information of Respondents

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of Undergraduate Students.

Respondents Level of Study			
University	Level of Study	Frequency	Percentage
University of Ibadan	Level 100	7	5.8
	Level 200	10	8.3
	Level 300	29	24.0
	Level 400	54	44.6
	Level 500 and above	22	18.4
	Total		122
University of Lagos	Level 100	23	7.4
	Level 200	37	12.0
	Level 300	87	28.2
	Level 400	106	34.4
	Level 500 and above	55	18
	Total		308
Obafemi Awolowo University	Level 100	104	36.0
	Level 200	73	25.0
	Level 300	58	19.4
	Level 400	32	11.0
	Level 500 and above	25	8.6
	Total		292

Table 2. presents the frequency, percentage of respondents from the three selected universities. It showed that 100 level students at Obafemi Awolowo University had 35% of percentage of respondent follow by University of Lagos with 7.4%. Similarly, University of Ibadan had, 54(44.6%) for 400 level students.

Table 3. Factors inhibiting the Use of E- books by Students.

The result presented the frequency and percentage of the factors inhibiting the use of e-books by students as presented in table 2 below.

Items	University of Ibadan (KDL)				University of Lagos Library				Obafemi Awolowo University (Hezekiah O. Library)			
	Yes	Freq (%)	No	Freq (%)	Yes	Freq (%)	No	Freq (%)	Yes	Freq (%)	No	Freq (%)
Factors affecting use of e-books												
Not aware of the available e-books	48	39.7	73	60.3	109	35.4	199	64.6	142	48.6	150	51.4
Not available in my library	39	32.2	82	67.7	109	35.4	199	64.6	118	40.4	174	59.6
Access problem	64	52.9	56	46.9	205	66.5	103	33.4	147	50.3	145	49.7
Irrelevant title	39	32.2	81	66.9	84	27.2	224	72.7	84	28.8	208	71.2
Have no need for e-books	12	9.9	109	90.1	100	32.5	208	67.5	58	19.9	234	80.1
Access to computer and the internet	54	44.6	67	55.3	90	29.2	218	70.8	136	46.6	156	53.4
Very Expensive	53	43.8	67	55.4	198	64.3	110	35.7	83	28.4	208	71.2
Power supply problem	89	73.6	31	25.6	200	64.9	108	35.1	133	45.5	159	54.5
Problem of logging in	72	59.5	49	40.5	98	31.8	210	68.1	113	38.7	179	61.3
Download Problem	89	73.6	32	26.4	204	66.2	104	33.8	142	48.6	150	51.3
Restriction on copying and printing	68	56.2	53	43.8	204	66.2	104	33.8	107	36.6	185	63.4
Lack of e-books readers	55	45.5	66	55.5	109	35.4	199	64.6	109	37.3	183	62.6
Copyright Issues	83	68.6	38	31.4	200	64.9	108	35.1	150	51.4	142	48.6
N=	121				308				292			

At the University of Ibadan, the following items were identified as factors inhibiting the use of e-books by students. 93(76.9%) subscription problem, 89(73.6%) power supply problem, 89(73.6%) downloading problem, 83(68.6%) copyright issues, 72(59.5%) problem of logging in, 68(56.2%) restriction on copying and printing, 55(45.5%) lack of e-book readers, and 54(44.6%) access to computer and the internet while items identified as factors inhibiting e-books use by students at the Obafemi Awolowo University were: 150(51.4%) subscription problem, 150(51.4%) copyright issues and 147(50.3%) access problem. However, items such as restriction on copyright and printing having 185(62.6%), downloading problem having 150(51.3%), problem of logging-in in having 179(61.3%), irrelevant title having 208(71.2%). The table also reflected the following as factors inhibiting e-books use by the University of Lagos students: 205(66.5%) access problem, 204((66.2%) download problem, 204(66.2%) restriction to copying and printing, 200(64.9%) copyright problem, 200(64.3%), power supply and 198(64.3%), very expensive.

This table therefore showed that at the University of Ibadan, the major factors inhibiting the use e-books by students were: subscription problem, power supply problem, downloading problem, copyright issues, problem of logging in, restriction on copying and printing, lack of e-book readers, and access to computer and the internet. At the Obafemi Awolowo University, students identified the factors: subscription problem, and copyright issues and access problem as the major factors inhibiting the use of e-books. While at the University of Lagos, Library, students identified the following factors inhibiting the use of e-books as access problem, download problem, restriction to copying and printing and copyright issue, power supply and cost of printing. All students in this study were of opinion that library should create awareness forum or inform them about the availability of e-books and user's training.

1.6. Discussion of The Findings

Management of e-books in the three selected university libraries are almost the same. From the interview carried out with the E-Librarians, it was revealed that the three university libraries considered cost of the e-books, the various disciplines in which e-books are made available, the modernity of the e-books and fund before selecting them for their libraries. This study also revealed that, selection was also through vendors' advertisement and request made by faculties or users. The result of this finding is similar to the findings made by Gisbergen, Profera, and Stamison (2009), who stated that, librarians select titles, often following end users' requests. In cases where end users select titles, the main responsibilities of librarians include managing budgets, placing orders, providing access to end users, and avoiding duplication of resources. The acquisition of e-books by the three university libraries was also done by subscribing to vendors to connect with the different publishers to buy those materials the libraries have requested for. Thus, acquisition of e-books was done through vendors, publishers and through direct purchase. This result is in line with Maceviciute, Borg, Kuzminiene and Korad (2014) that the main sources of e-books in academic libraries are through publishers through a direct purchase Green (2004) note that the subscription are funded through both internal and external sources. However, there are many challenges facing academic librarians, managers and members of faculty preparing for the effective adoption and use of ebooks in academic contexts. still some challenges hindering management of e-books by students, from the findings the inhibitors were: the problem of subscription, downloading, power supply, copyright issues, access restriction on copying and printing. Thus, this study is in tandem with the study carried out by Brown (2009), stating that e-books are subject to technical problems concerned with logging in and Digital Rights Management issues imposed by publishers. The result of this finding was also supported by Vasileiou and Rowley (2008) which noted that the factors inhibiting the use of e-books by users include: unfriendly interface, e-books software which can confuse users.

1.7. Conclusions

The management of e-books in Nigerian university libraries can be encouraged through effective collection management and provision of stable internet connections, provision of relevant titles, ability to access e-books outside the university environment and ability to use e-books, without restrictions from publishers. This study was able to identify that level of users' knowledge of e-books use was good, though a very a low percentage of the students from the three university responded that they were not aware of e-books and never had the need for it. In addition, university libraries should create a friendly platform for the use of e-books within the university environments. Furthermore, e-librarians should look out for publishers who are ready to provide e-books with a friendly user's interface and grant perpetuity of back issues.

Username and password should be made available in all departmental libraries for accessibility of the available subscribed e-books. There should be limited restrictions and copyright issue should be controlled. Students should be able to download needed information using the pdf format. The e-librarians should also work on cataloguing of e-books in the library Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC) which will definitely help for quick search of the available e-books by users.

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